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ABSTRACT

This study identifies Australian girls' sports participation and variables associated with participation and dropping out. It describes the sporting experiences, and the decisions associated with those experiences, of a group of girls opposing traditional pressures by participating in a "male" sport (soccer). A survey was conducted of 105 female soccer players (ages 13-18) classified into 3 subgroups (continuing, withdrawn, and new), and interviews were conducted with 15 of the girls. The study addressed factors encouraging and discouraging girls to play soccer; parents' involvement in sport; peer reactions to girls playing sport; gender connotations of sport; role of significant others, such as family members and coaches; and the girls' self-image. The study found that support from young women already playing soccer and from family members was an important factor in the subjects' participation. They chose soccer because it offered fun, friendship, feeling good, and good coaches. They had experienced negative attitudes and verbal intimidation from male peers but had opted to play soccer anyway. The demands of studies was an important factor in discouraging young women from playing soccer. Five recommendations are offered for attracting girls to soccer and retaining their participation. Appendixes provide forms used in the study and statistical data from the study. (Contains 23 references.) (JDD)

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GIRLS PLAYING SOCCER

RESISTANCE

OR

SUBMISSION?

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A Report to the National Sports Research Centre,
Australian Sports Commission

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October 1993

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GIRLS PLAYING SOCCER : RESISTANCE OR SUBMISSION?
A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN'S SOCCER IN THE ACT

A REPORT TO THE NATIONAL SPORTS RESEARCH CENTRE,
AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

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October 1993

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction

This study addresses the need to look at girls' sporting participation from a different perspective. In addition to identifying girls sports participation and variables associated with participation and drop-out, this study describes the sporting experiences, and the decisions associated with those experiences, of a group of girls opposing traditional pressures by participating in a 'male' sport.

1.2 Overview of Factors Affecting Girls Sports Participation

Whatever the measure, whatever the source, the message is clear, women and girls are not "Halfway to Equal" with men in terms of their sport participation. "One of the most striking features about the participation of women in sport is the alarmingly high rate at which young girls drop out from active participation" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992, 115).

The literature on women and girls sport participation tells us:

- fewer women and girls are involved in regular physical activity and sport compared to men, (Women & Sport Unit, Australian Sports Commission (WSU), Fact Sheet 1; Dahlgren, 1988, 10); 16% of females compared to 24% of males (over 14 years) participate in organised sport (WSU, Fact Sheet 1).

- Among registered sport participants, women are outnumbered by men by more than 3 to 1 (WSU, Fact Sheet 1).

- More girls drop out of sport earlier than boys; approximately 47% of boys (14-19 years) play organised sport, compared to only 37% of girls in the same age group (WSU, Fact Sheet 1). Up to 60% of girls involved in sport at school drop out on leaving school (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992, 115).

Why are these messages of concern?

> "As a preventative health measure sport is not only important to the individual woman but to the whole nation" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992, 7).

With health expenditure increasing and spending on preventative programs falling, the role of sport as one of the key factors in prevention of health problems (for example, heart disease, stress, loss of bone mass and obesity) is increasing in importance.

The lower sport participation of women and girls, together with the higher drop-out rate of girls, could signal a significant area of concern for health professionals.

Concern for the health of girls is supported by observations that indicate:

- there are more unfit girls than there are unfit boys;
- aerobic fitness of girls on average, declines after about age 12;
- the performances of pre-pubescent girls tend to be on average inferior to those of boys of the same age in various performance measures of fitness (except flexibility); and
- there are more obese girls than there are obese boys (WSU, Fact Sheet 2).

Sport provides girls with a sense of empowerment through a sense of achievement, a sense of physical well-being and a positive self-image.

Factors influencing girls' participation in sport can be summarised as:

1. Self-esteem/Self-concept

- Both are closely linked to body appearance and function and girls are more critical of their bodies than boys (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).
- Decisions to participate in sport are generally based on a conclusion that involvement is consistent with their self-definition (Coakley, 1992, 26).

- Girls in general have lower self-esteem and more negative self-concepts than boys (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

- Females attach more importance to watching their weight than do males.

- Myths concerning women's bodies, for example, females are weak and easily injured, persist.

- Media coverage of female sport tends to focus on body image rather than achievement.

2. Perceptions of Performance

- Young women are not as likely as young men to define themselves as sportspersons, even when they are physically active (Coakley, 1992, 26).

- Girls tend to underestimate their performance and to feel they have done worse than boys even in cases where boys and girls do equally well (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

- Girls tend to underestimate their competency (and potential competency) in physical activity (Dahlgren, 1988, 28).

- Women tend to attribute their success to luck, whereas men think in terms of effort (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

- A higher percentage of girls than boys gave "not feeling competent enough to participate" as a reason for not participating in competitive sport (Lindner et. al., 1991, 40).

3. Skill Level

- From an early age girls receive less encouragement to develop a full range of motor skills leaving them at a disadvantage when they participate in sporting activity (Dahlgren, 1988, 29).

- Differences in skill levels between females and males are evident by the time children enter school and the differences increase with age (Dahlgren, 1988, 18).

- Lack of sports skills pressures girls out of sport (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

4. Support and Encouragement from Family and Friends.

- Decisions to begin participation in sport and to continue participating are tied to encouragement and support from significant others. (Coakley, 1992, 30).

- Females are discouraged from participation in some types of physical activity and/or are not encouraged to participate to the same extent as males (Dahlgren, 1988, 5).

- Females have an inadequate level of support for participation in physical activity, in terms of numbers of role models, competency of role models and positive (non-stereotypical) support (Dahlgren, 1988, 29).

- Parents' behaviour influences that of their daughters; parents who play tend to have daughters who play (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

- Both mothers and fathers thought some sports were more suitable for boys than girls and vice versa (Australian Sports Commission (ASC), 1991, 16).

5. Society's Expectations of the Role of Girls

- Parental expectations that girls will assist with childcare or meal preparation restrict girls free time.

- Girls continue to play sports traditionally described as female sports (ASC, 1991, 18).

- Girls perceive sport as a male domain and they have no belief in their own ability or their right to join in (evidence to the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs quoted in their final report, 1992, 115).

- Boys tend to base their sporting participation decisions on their own interests and expect their girlfriends to support their participation by their presence as a passive spectator. Girls accept this role, often giving their own interests a low priority for the sake of maintaining a relationship with their boyfriends (Coakley, 1992, 29 and 33).

- Girls do not define sport in ways that connect it with the process of becoming a woman (Coakley, 1992, 25). Girls seek activities that reaffirm their femininity.

- Gender stereotypic attitudes are important in determining sports participation and preferences of school age girls (Archer and McDonald, 1990, 239).

- The issues of femininity/masculinity and the aspersions on ones sexuality appear to act as powerful deterrents to girls sport participation (Varpalotai, 1987, 417).

- Social practices which expose girls to a pattern of expectations and experiences different from those of boys narrow the opportunities girls have for sport (ASC, 1991, 11).

6. Childhood Sporting Experiences and Perceptions contribute to Future Expectations

- What happens in school teams or in physical education classes can form the basis for expectations of future sport experiences (Coakley, 1992, 31).

7. Lack of Opportunities

- Boys have a greater range of opportunities and easier access to sport than girls (ASC, 1991, 18).

- Lack of opportunity pressures girls out of sport (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

- Girls have an inadequate variety of activity opportunities and are denied access to some activities in which they might choose to participate (Dahlgren, 1988, 31).

8. Time Pressures and Economic Factors

- Lack of time is an important limitation on girls sport participation (WSU, Fact Sheet 3).

- The cost of team/club membership, equipment and travel affects sport participation.

Research has clearly established the sporting participation levels of women and girls and the factors influencing their participation. The need now is to move beyond these representations to describe girls sporting experiences and the decisions related to those experiences to build a more detailed and appropriate insight into girls sporting choices.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Research to date tells us that not only are fewer females than males involved in regular physical activity, but also that more girls drop out of sport and at an earlier age than boys.

The increasing importance of sport in preventative health programs combined with a concern for girls health arising from the results of formal fitness assessments, suggest a need to investigate further girls sporting participation. A need exists to look into factors which attract and sustain girls participation in sport, as well as those factors which mitigate against participation or lead to withdrawal.

Factors influencing girls participation in sport can be summarised under the following headings:

- self-esteem/self-concept/body image;
- perceptions of performance;
- skill levels;
- support and encouragement from family and friends;
- society's expectations of the role of girls;
- childhood sporting experiences;
- lack of opportunities; and,
- time pressures and economic constraints.

While these factors and their interactions succeed in keeping some girls out of sport or lead many of those who do participate to drop out, some girls do become, and remain, involved in sport. Sport for these girls can act as a form of resistance to traditional socialisation patterns. By choosing to play sport these girls place themselves outside the social mainstream (Varpalotai, 1987, 417). Sport for these girls offers a "hidden curriculum" which positively counteracts the negative participation constraints (Varpalotai, 1987, 417).

Girls playing soccer may represent a subculture opposing traditional pressures on girls. To date, the concept of girls soccer as a site of resistance, has not been explored. In fact, a dearth of data exists on all aspects of girls participation in soccer.

As Coakley points out, however, the literature in the sociology of sport probably has enough studies reporting lists of sport participation patterns with accompanying lists of variables associated with participation and drop-out (1992, 34). This study is a response to the call for "more accounts of ongoing actual experiences [of girls] and the decisions related to those experiences" (Coakley, 1992, 34). It represents an attempt to render visible the sport experiences of a previously invisible group - girls playing soccer.

1.4 Setting the Scene - Women's Soccer in the ACT

Women's soccer, though a recent entrant on the Australian sporting scene, is more established in Europe and North America. The final of the first FIFA world women's championships in China in 1991 attracted 65,000 spectators.

The Australian Women's Soccer Association was formed in 1974 at the inaugural national championships in Sydney to provide greater opportunities for women in Australia to participate in soccer. The ACT Women's Soccer Association has been operating since 1979. Ten teams competed in the first ACT competition. The 1980 season saw the entry of three additional teams. Since then, the number of registered teams has varied. Currently there are some 400 club players distributed among the 24 teams. Approximately one third of these players are under 18 years of age.

Girls under twelve years of age play in either a girls only competition or in mixed gender teams. However, when girls leave primary school they must choose between playing in open age teams with older women or leaving soccer. Age group competitions for high school girls are not available in the ACT club league.

ACT women's soccer teams compete nationally at the Junior (under 16 years), Youth (under 19 years) and Open age championships. At the Open level, the ACT has been represented at national championships since 1980, at the Junior level since 1983 and at the Youth level since the inaugural championships in 1985.

2. Research Design

2.1 Aims of the Research

To address the invisibility of girls playing soccer this research aims to:

1. Provide a quantitative overview of teenage girls participation in the ACT Womens' Soccer Association 1993 competition .

2. Explore how girls opposing traditional pressures by participating in a perceived 'male' sport (soccer) make decisions associated with participation and withdrawal.

3. Advise the ACT Women's Soccer Association of the outcomes of this research and suggest possible strategies in relation to these outcomes.

4. Develop an approach to investigating girls participation in sport applicable to the concerns of other state and national women's sporting organisations.

Girls sporting choices are not made in isolation in response to a simple cause-effect relationship. Their decision to participate (or not to participate or to change sports) is the result of choices negotiated within their social context and mediated by other factors such as their self-image and personal goals and actual and perceived skill levels.

A study of ACT women's soccer as a case study of a female sporting subculture will establish a participation data base and provide an opportunity to look behind the messages girls receive about sports participation, beyond the question 'why', to a more detailed insight into girls sporting choices.

2.2 Research Stages

The steps involved at each of the ten stages of this investigation are outlined in Chart 2.1. A review of the available literature describing girls and womens sporting participation directed the researchers to their topic and suggested an approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Chart 2.1 Research Stages

Stage 1 Background	1. Literature Survey. 2. Formulation of Research Topic and Approach. 3. Elicit support from the Australian Women's Soccer Association (AWSA). 4. Apply to NSRC for grant to support research.
Stage 2 Organisation	5. Notify the Australian Women's Soccer Association of successful application. 6. Meet with representatives of the Australian Women's Soccer Association and the ACT Women's Soccer Association to form a working group. Discuss research aims and methods.
Stage 3 Sample Selection	7. Compile a list of 1992 & 1993 registered women soccer players in the ACT under 19 years of age. 8. Draw a sample stratified by current playing status (continuing, withdrawn, new).
Stage 4 Develop the Structured Questionnaire	9. Draft Structured Questionnaire. 10. Working group discusses the draft questionnaire and works towards final format. 11. Executive of ACT Women's Soccer Association approve the questionnaire.
Stage 5 Implement Structured Questionnaire	12. Send a letter to each of the selected girls describing the survey and seeking their participation. 13. Administer structured questionnaire.
Stage 6 Analysis of Questionnaire Responses	14. Enter questionnaire responses into computer data base. 15. Statistical analysis of responses. 16. Draft a report on questionnaire responses.
Stage 7 Develop Interview Schedule	17. Using questionnaire responses, participants' comments and research directions suggested by the literature review, develop a semi-structured schedule to guide the interviews.
Stage 8 Conduct Interviews	18. Contact those girls who indicated on the structured survey their willingness to participate in the interviews, confirm their continued availability and arrange a time and place to conduct the interview. 19. Conduct the interviews.
Stage 9 Interview Analysis	20. Use thematic analysis techniques to examine interview responses. 21. Prepare a report on interviews.
Stage 10 Preparation & Presentation of Final Report	22. Integrate questionnaire and interview reports into final report structure. 23. Present final report to NSRC, AWSA & ACTWSA.

2.3 Selecting the Sample

Lists of player registrations were obtained from ACTWSA for the years 1992 and 1993. From these lists the researchers identified those players who had registered in both seasons (continuing players), those players on the 1992 list but not on the 1993 list (withdrawn players) and players registered in 1993 but not in 1992 (new players). The number of players in each group by age in 1993 is shown in Table 2.1.

The brief was to administer a structured questionnaire to approximately 100 girls, equal numbers being drawn from each subgroup (ie. continuing, withdrawn and new players). With this in mind, 35 girls from each subgroup were selected. All new players were included in the sample. Players in the continuing and withdrawn groups were chosen by selecting every third name on the list until the required number of respondents in each age group had been selected. Where numbers were sufficient reserves for each of these groups were also chosen to replace girls who were unable (for example, no longer lived in the ACT) or unwilling to complete a questionnaire. The age and current status of the sample population is shown in Table 2.2. Table 2.3 gives a breakdown of the sample by club affiliation and age. Table 2.4 shows the number of players chosen to complete the structured questionnaire in each subgroup (continuing, withdrawn and new) by club affiliation.

Table 2.1 Players by Age and Playing Status

Age in 1993 (Years)	1993 Playing Status			Total
	Continuing Player	Withdrawn Player	New Player	
18	10	10	11	31
17	13	15	3	31
16	13	4	7	24
15	11	12	8	31
14	12	2	4	18
13	2	2	2	6
Total	61	45	35	141

Table 2.2 Players' Sample by Age and Playing Status

Age in 1993 (Years)	1993 Playing Status			Total
	Continuing Player	Withdrawn	New Player	
18	6	8	11	25
17	7	10	3	20
16	7	4	7	18
15	6	9	8	23
14	7	2	4	13
13	2	2	2	6
Total	35	35	35	105

Table 2.3 Players' Sample by Age and Club Affiliation

Club	Age (Years)						
	18	17	16	15	14	13	Total
University of Canberra	6	1	1	1	2	1	12
ADF	3						3
Belconnen United	3	6	3	2			14
Southerncross Stormbirds	3	2	3	5	1		14
Tuggeranong United		2	7	4	4	3	20
Weston Creek	2	3	1	4	1		11
Canberra CSC	2		1		1		7
Canberra City	5	4	1	4	3	1	18
Croatia		1			1	1	3
ANU	1						1
Olympic		1	1				2
Total	25	20	18	23	13	6	105

Table 2.4 Players' Sample by 1993 Playing Status and Club Affiliation

Club	Continuing Players	Withdrawn Players	New Players	Total
University of Canberra	3	2	7	12
ADF	1		2	3
Belconnen United	4	8	2	14
Southerncross Stormbirds	6	6	2	14
Tuggeranong United	10	3	7	20
Weston Creek	3	4	4	11
Canberra CSC	3		3	7
Canberra City	5	6	8	18
Croatia		3		3
ANU		1		1
Olympic		2		2
Total	35	35	35	105

2.4 The Structured Questionnaire

The questionnaire (Appendices 1 & 2) provided data on players':

- school grade, birthplace, parents' birthplace and family membership;
- sport participation history in various contexts (in classtime at school, with family or friends, for their school and for a club);
- current competitive sport participation;
- reasons for playing soccer;
- introduction to soccer;
- parents' sporting participation (current and past) and their support for their daughters' participation;

- feelings about their coach;
- reactions of boys and other girls to respondent's sports participation; and
- for players in the withdrawn sample, their reasons for withdrawing from soccer.

The final question identified girls willing to participate in the next stage, the semi-structured interviews.

2.5 Administering the Structured Questionnaire

After the questionnaire had been approved by a meeting of the ACT Women's Soccer Association and club delegates, a letter (Appendix 3) was sent to each player in the continuing and new player samples informing them of the project aims and seeking their participation.

Comparing the ACTWSA draw for the current season with the club affiliations of selected players in these two groups researchers were able to organise a timetable for implementation of the structured questionnaire. On the advice of the ACTWSA questionnaires were administered to groups of girls after their games on Sunday 23rd May and Sunday 30th May 1993.

Girls in the withdrawn sample were initially approached by phone. The girls were asked to either:

- organise a time to meet with a researcher to complete the questionnaire, or
- if it was more convenient, the researcher posted the questionnaire to the player.

2.6 Analysis of Structured Questionnaire Data

The database FileMaker Pro (Version 2.0) was used to store questionnaire data. The facility within this database to transfer data to other programs for further analysis was utilised to set up data files in EXCEL and SPSS. Cross tabulation and simple statistical analysis was undertaken on the 'exported' data sets.

2.7 The Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviews aimed to begin to picture how a particular group of girls experience playing soccer and make decisions about participation and withdrawal. The interview schedule is included as Appendix 4. During the interview the researchers aimed to discuss with the girls:

- Gender Connotations of Sport,
- Girls' Self-Perception :
    - physical appearance, and
    - feelings when playing sport,
- Influence of Significant Others, and
- Girls' Sporting Future.

Specifically, the researchers hoped to touch on the following issues:

Gender Connotations of Sport

- Girls' Sport Participation (actual, expected, appropriate/inappropriate)
- Characteristics which define a sport as masculine or feminine
- Decisions about playing soccer/sport

Girls' Self-Perception

Feelings when Playing Sport

- Feelings when playing soccer
- Feelings when playing sport in different contexts

Physical Appearance

- What girls playing soccer look like
- Comparison of self with others in terms of appearance, skills, sport ability
- Characteristics of a good soccer player, relation to self
- Characteristics of an elite sportsperson, relation to self
- Heroes/heroines, characteristics and influence

Influence of Significant Others

Coach

- Description of training
- Description of coach
- Characteristics of a good coach

- Influence of coach
- Specific questionnaire follow-ups

Family Members

- Parents' interest in/feelings about daughters' sport participation
- Parents' influence on daughters' sport participation (sports played, attitude to winning, training)
- Specific questionnaire follow-up, particularly influence of parents' past sport participation and role as spectators

Sporting Future

- Future involvement in soccer
- Sport as a lifelong pursuit
- Sport as a career

2.8 Conducting the Interviews

Fifty five players indicated their willingness to talk with the researchers again about some of the issues raised in the questionnaire (Table 2.5). This list of players was divided into subgroups based on the players' current playing status (continuing, withdrawn, new). From each subgroup the name of every third player was noted until five names, plus five reserves, had been chosen. Each of these girls was contacted and their willingness to participate further in the study confirmed. A few of the players contacted did not wish to participate in the interview stage, others on the list could not be contacted and one player had left Canberra. Fifteen players (five continuing, five withdrawn and five new players) agreed to be interviewed.

Table 2.5 Players Willingness to Talk with Researchers about Issues raised in the Questionnaire by 1993 Playing Status

Players' Response	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Yes	21 (72)	15 (71)	19 (86)	55 (77)
No	7 (24)	6 (29)	2 (9)	15 (21)
No Answer	1 (3)		1 (5)	2 (2)
Total	29 (100)	21 (100)	22 (100)	72 (100)

Each player was interviewed in her own home by one of three members of the interview team. Each interviewer talked with girls and young women from only one of the player subgroups. All interviews were taped. Permission to record the interview was obtained prior to commencement of the interview. Interviewers also made notes during and/or immediately after the interviews as appropriate. Later the interviewers listened to the tapes, often several times, noting responses to questions, recurring themes, points of interest or contention and questions for further discussion with other interviewers.

All players were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. When requested by the player interview tapes were wiped immediately after the interviewer had noted the players' responses to each of the questions on the schedule and other comments arising from issues raised by the player during the interview. The remaining tapes were wiped on completion of the final report.

The semi-structured interview schedule provided a framework for the interview. Interviewers were also guided by players' concerns. Issues of particular importance to players were explored in the context of each individuals' concerns.

2.9 Analysis of the Interviews

The interview data was analysed using a thematic analysis technique. Analysis took place in two stages:

- Ongoing Analysis During Interviewing

Given that "without ongoing analysis one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocussed, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed" (Merriam, 1990, 124), the researchers:

- Continually reassessed the aims and general questions which guided the research, reformulated and redirected as necessary.
- Considered each interview in the light of previous sessions.
- Wrote a report immediately after each interview using notes made during the interview, notes made after the interview and the tape recording of the interview.
- Organised their interview notes according to a scheme that made sense to the individual researchers so that specific points could easily be located during later analysis.

- On completion of the Interviewing

At this time researchers shared their organised interview data with each other. Each researcher read the interview report or listened to a tape recording of interviews with players from each of the other player subgroups. During this time the researchers tried to identify common themes and differences in the players' experiences.

A meeting of the research team then followed to develop a preliminary outline of themes, patterns, regularities and differences. Following this meeting researchers returned to their interviews seeking support for common themes and differences in experience.

At their next meeting researchers presented their material. Agreement was reached on themes for inclusion in a draft report of interviews and the format for presentation of interview material finalised. Two researchers then took responsibility for integrating the themes into a description of the experience of girls playing soccer in the ACT.

Each member of the research team read the draft report and the team met to discuss the contents. The final format and content of the report of the interview material emerged after revision and rewriting in the light of the groups' comments.

2.10 Summary

- The study aimed to establish a participation data base and provide an opportunity to look behind the messages girls receive about sports participation, beyond the question 'why', to a more detailed insight into girls sporting participation choices.

- A review of the available literature describing girls and womens sporting participation directed the researchers to their topic and suggested an approach incorporating both quantitative (a structured questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) methods.

- The study involved:

  1. Background Investigation
  2. Initial Organisation
  3. Selection of the Sample
  4. Developing a Structured Questionnaire

5. Implementing the Structured Questionnaire
6. Analysing the Questionnaire Responses
7. Developing a Semi-structured Interview Schedule
8. Conducting the Interviews
9. Analysing the Interview Responses
10. Preparation and Presentation of the Final Report.

- A sample of 105 players, 35 players from each of the player subgroups (continuing, withdrawn, new) was chosen to complete the structured questionnaire.

- The structured questionnaire sought to develop a profile of players depicting their past and current sporting participation, their entry into soccer, their parents' sporting participation and their level of support for their daughter's participation, players' feelings about their coach, their perceptions of the reactions of peers to their participation in sport and for withdrawn players, reasons discouraging them from playing soccer.

- The semi-structured interviews aimed to begin to picture how a particular group of girls experience playing soccer and make decisions about participation and withdrawal. Issues related to the gender connotations of sport, girls' self-image, the influence of significant others and players' sporting futures were discussed.

- Fifteen players agreed to participate in the interview stage. Each interview was tape recorded and confidentiality assured.

- The interview data was analysed using a thematic analysis technique. Ongoing analysis during the interviewing was followed on completion of the interviewing by researchers, both individually and through group discussion, searching for common themes and differences in players' experiences. The themes emerging from this discussion were integrated into a description of the experiences of girls playing soccer in the ACT.

3. Profile of Girls Playing Soccer in the ACT

3.1 The Players

Of the one hundred and five players randomly selected to participate in the survey, responses were received from seventy nine players (a response rate of 75%). Of these players, thirty were continuing players, twenty two were new players, twenty five respondents no longer played soccer (withdrawn players) and the current playing status of two girls was unknown (they had removed the playing status number from their questionnaire). However, four of the questionnaires returned by withdrawn players were received after analysis of the structured questionnaire data had been completed.

Non-response occurred in situations where:

- the contact address from the registration file was incorrect and the current address was unknown. For example, ten girls no longer playing soccer did not live at the address recorded on their registration form and had left no forwarding address.

- the player had left Canberra or gone overseas. Four players from the withdrawn sample were now interstate or overseas.

- the player could not be contacted either at the games or by phone and did not return a questionnaire posted to the contact address recorded in the registration records.

- the player was given a questionnaire by the coach at training but did not return the questionnaire to the researchers.

- the playing status of the player had changed since player registrations were recorded. For example, six girls initially classed as new players were found to be no longer playing. Contact by phone or through the post could be made with only four of the six players.

The club affiliation of respondents and their 1993 playing status is shown in Table 3.1. Questionnaire responses from the two players whose 1993 playing status was not known have been included only where responses were not examined according to players' current playing status.

Most girls responding to the survey were at school (Grades 7 through 12) and aged between 14 and 17 years (Tables 3.2 & 3.3). One fifth of the girls were 18 years of age, and a similar proportion were not at school (Tables 3.2 & 3.3).

Table 3.1 Players by Club and 1993 Playing Status

Club	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
University of Canberra	1 (3)	5 (24)	2 (9)	8 (11)
ADF	1 (3)		2 (9)	3 (4)
Belconnen United	5 (17)	4 (19)	1 (5)	10 (14)
Southerncross Stormbirds	6 (20)	2 (10)	2 (9)	10 (14)
Tuggeranong United	8 (27)	1 (5)	4 (18)	13 (18)
Weston Creek	3 (10)	3 (14)	4 (18)	10 (14)
Canberra CSC	3 (10)		2 (9)	5 (8)
Canberra City	3 (10)	3 (14)	5 (23)	11 (15)
Croatia		1 (5)		1 (1)
Olympic		2 (10)		2 (3)
Total	30 (100)	21 (100)	22 (100)	73 (100)

Table 3.2 Players' School Grade by 1993 Playing Status

Grade	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
7		2 (10)		2 (3)
8	2 (7)	1 (5)	2 (9)	5 (7)
9	8 (28)	1 (5)	5 (23)	14 (19)
10	3 (10)	4 (19)	5 (23)	12 (18)
11	6 (21)	2 (10)	5 (23)	13 (18)
12	5 (17)	7 (33)	1 (5)	13 (18)
Not at School	5 (17)	4 (19)	4 (18)	13 (18)
Total	29 (100)	21 (100)	22 (100)	72 (100)

Table 3.3 Players' Age by 1993 Playing Status

Age	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
18	5 (17)	6 (29)	4 (18)	15 (21)
17	6 (20)	6 (29)	3 (14)	15 (21)
16	6 (20)	1 (5)	5 (23)	12 (16)
15	5 (17)	5 (24)	6 (27)	16 (22)
14	7 (23)	1 (5)	3 (14)	11 (15)
13	1 (3)	2 (10)	1 (5)	4 (5)
Total	30 (100)	21 (100)	22(100)	73 (100)

Most of the players and their parents were born in Australia (Tables 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 & 3.7). Girls born overseas had come from England, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, USA, South Africa, Norway and Tanzania (Table 3.4). A slightly higher proportion of players' mothers (70%) than fathers (63%) were Australian born (Table 3.5). The mothers of one quarter of the girls born in Australia were born overseas (Table 3.6), while nearly one third (31%) of the fathers of Australian born players were born overseas (Table 3.7). After Australia, the next most frequently represented country of birth for mothers was England (12%) and for fathers, Italy (8%) and Germany (4%) (Table 3.5).

Table 3.4 Players' Country of Birth by 1993 Playing Status

Country of Birth	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Australia	27 (90)	18 (86)	20 (91)	65 (89)
England	1 (3)			1 (1)
New Zealand	1 (3)			1 (1)
Sri Lanka			1 (5)	1 (1)
USA			1 (5)	1 (1)
South Africa	1 (3)	1 (5)		2 (3)
Norway		1 (5)		1 (1)
Tanzania		1 (5)		1 (1)
Total	30 (100)	21 (100)	22 (100)	73 (100)

Table 3.5 Players' Parents' Country of Birth

Country of Birth	Mother (%)	Father (%)
Argentina	1 (1)	
Australia	52 (70)	47 (63)
China		1 (1)
Croatia	1 (1)	1 (1)
England	9 (12)	2 (3)
Fiji	1 (1)	
Finland	1 (1)	
Germany		4 (5)
Greece	1 (1)	2 (3)
India		1 (1)
Italy	2 (3)	6 (8)
Korea	1 (1)	
Lebanon		1 (1)
Malta		1 (1)
New Zealand	2 (3)	3 (4)
Norway	1 (1)	1 (1)
Peru	1 (1)	
South Africa	1 (1)	1 (1)
Tanzania		1 (1)
UK	1 (1)	1 (1)
USA		1 (1)
Not Given		1 (1)
Total	75 (100)	75 (100)

Table 3.6 Players' Birthplace by Mothers' Birthplace

Mothers' Birthplace	Players' Birthplace (%)		
	Australia	Overseas	Total
Australia	50 (75)	2 (25)	52 (69)
Overseas	17 (25)	6 (75)	23 (31)
Total	67 (100)	8 (100)	75 (100)

Table 3.7 Players' Birthplace by Fathers' Birthplace

Fathers' Birthplace	Players' Birthplace (%)		
	Australia	Overseas	Total
Australia	46 (69)	1 (13)	47 (63)
Overseas	21 (31)	7 (87)	28 (37)
Total	67 (100)	8(100)	75 (100)

3.2 Sports Played

Girls had played a wide variety of sports in classtime at school. Of the twenty seven sports listed on the questionnaire, fourteen sports had been played during classtime at school by 50% or more of the girls. Soccer/Roo ball (73%) and volleyball (73%) were the sports played by the highest proportion of girls in this context (Table 3.8). The next most frequently played sports were softball (72%), netball/netta netball (68%), hockey/minkey (66%) and aerobics/gymnastics (66%) (Table 3.8). Few girls had played rugby union/walla rugby (8%), gone skiing (12%), played water polo (15%) or ridden a bicycle (15%) during classtime at school (Table 3.8).

When with their family or friends the girls rode bicycles (65%), skated (63%), went swimming (57%) or horse riding (54%) (Table 3.8). It was notable, that for most other sports the proportion of girls playing the sport in this context was much lower than the proportion playing the sport in classtime at school.

With the notable exception of soccer, the proportion of girls who had played a sport for a club or for their school, was low. Just over three quarters of the girls had played soccer for their school, while only 37% had played softball and netball/netta netball, the sports ranked second in terms of the proportion of girls who had played the sport for their school (Table 3.8). The proportion of girls who had played soccer for a club was, not surprisingly, high (99%) (Table 3.8). What was notable was the dominance of soccer in this context. While all the girls except one had played soccer for a club, only 30% had participated in athletics events for a club (Table 3.8). Tennis was the next most frequently played sport in this context (28%), followed by netball (26%) and softball (24%) (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8 Sports Played by Context

Sport	Played in Classtime at School (%)	Played with Family or Friends (%)	Played for School (%)	Played for a Club (%)
Aerobics/Gymnastics Gymfun	49 (66)	18 (24)	10 (14)	13 (18)
Athletics/Little Athletics	37 (50)	6 (8)	25 (34)	22 (30)
Australian Football/Aussie Footy	23 (31)	13 (18)	2 (3)	2 (3)
Badminton	42 (57)	9 (12)	10 (14)	3 (4)
Baseball	33 (45)	8 (11)	7 (10)	2 (3)
Basketball/Mini Basketball	47 (64)	20 (27)	21 (28)	10 (14)
Bicycle Riding	11 (15)	48 (65)	3 (4)	1 (1)
Cricket/Kanga Cricket	45 (61)	22 (30)	18 (24)	6 (8)
Golf	16 (22)	23 (31)	2 (3)	1 (1)
Hockey/Minkey	49 (66)	12 (16)	18 (24)	12 (16)
Horse Riding	12 (16)	40 (54)	1 (1)	5 (7)
Lacrosse/Sofcrosse	34 (46)			
Netball/Netta Netball	50 (68)	13 (18)	27 (37)	19 (26)
Orienteering	20 (27)	5 (7)	3 (4)	1 (1)
Rugby League/Mod League	21 (28)	10 (14)	2 (3)	4 (5)
Rugby Union/Walla Rugby	6 (8)	1 (1)	2 (3)	
Skating	21 (28)	46 (63)	1 (1)	3 (4)
Skiing	9 (12)	35 (47)	3 (4)	1 (1)
Soccer/Roo Ball	54 (73)	33 (45)	57 (77)	74 (99)
Softball	53 (72)	11 (15)	27 (37)	18 (24)
Squash/Mini Squash	18 (24)	17 (23)	4 (5)	2 (3)
Swimming	40 (54)	42 (57)	18 (24)	12 (16)
Tee Ball	40 (54)	6 (8)	12 (16)	8 (11)
Tennis/Ace Tennis	40 (54)	32 (43)	8 (11)	21 (28)
Touch Football	41 (56)	25 (34)	15 (20)	7 (10)
Volleyball	54 (73)	18 (24)	22 (30)	2 (3)
Water Polo	11 (15)	1 (1)	5 (7)	1 (1)

There was little variation in the sports played by girls from each of the player groups in each of the contexts (Tables 3.9, 3.10 & 3.11). Soccer/Roo Ball, softball, volleyball and netball/netta netball were played during classtime at school by high proportions of girls form each of the player groups. A higher proportion of new players (81%) than continuing players (47%) had played basketball/mini basketball in this context. When playing with family or friends girls from all player groups liked to skate, ride horses and bicycles. Similar proportions of

continuing and withdrawn players had played soccer/roo ball and softball for their school (Tables 3.9 & 3.10). A higher proportion of new players (52%) had played netball/netta netball for a club than both continuing players (37%) and withdrawn players (24%) (Tables 3.9, 3.10 & 3.11). Over half the continuing players had competed in athletics events for a club while only 14% of new and withdrawn players had represented a club in this sport. One third of continuing and new players had played softball for a club while only 5% of withdrawn players had played softball in this context.

Table 3.9 Sports Played by Context by 1993 Playing Status - Continuing Players

Sport	Played in Classtime at School (%)	Played with Family or Friends (%)	Played for School (%)	Played for a Club (%)
Aerobics/Gymnastics Gymfun	18 (60)	5 (17)	4 (13)	5 (17)
Athletics/Little Athletics	11 (37)	2 (7)	7 (23)	16 (53)
Australian Football/Aussie Footy	6 (20)	4 (13)	1 (3)	2 (7)
Badminton	15 (50)	3 (10)	7 (23)	
Baseball	10 (33)	4 (13)	1 (3)	1 (3)
Basketball/Mini Basketball	14 (47)	8 (27)	7 (23)	3 (10)
Bicycle Riding	2 (7)	18(60)	3 (10)	1 (3)
Cricket/Kanga Cricket	15 (50)	9 (30)	7 (23)	3 (10)
Golf	3 (10)	10 (33)	2 (7)	1 (3)
Hockey/Minkey	20 (67)	5 (17)	7 (23)	3 (10)
Horse Riding	5 (17)	18 (60)		2 (7)
Lacrosse/Soficrosse	14 (47)			
Netball/Netta Netball	18 (60)	4 (13)	11 (37)	6 (20)
Orienteering	4 (13)	2 (7)	1 (3)	
Rugby League/Mod League	7 (23)	5 (17)	1 (3)	
Rugby Union/Walla Rugby	2 (7)			
Skating	8 (27)	19 (66)	1 (3)	2 (7)
Skiing	1 (3)	11 (37)		
Soccer/Roo Ball	21 (70)	14 (47)	25 (83)	30 (100)
Softball	20 (67)	5 (17)	13 (43)	10 (33)
Squash/Mini Squash	6 (20)	8 (27)	1(3)	1 (3)
Swimming	14 (47)	17 (57)	8 (27)	8 (27)
Tee Ball	15 (50)	5 (17)	7 (23)	5 (17)
Tennis/Ace Tennis	17 (57)	9 (30)	4 (13)	10 (33)
Touch Football	15 (50)	9 (30)	7 (23)	
Volleyball	20 (67)	7 (23)	9 (30)	
Water Polo	2 (7)		3 (10)	

Table 3.10 Sports Played by Context by 1993 Playing Status - Withdrawn Players

Sport	Played in Classtime at School (%)	Played with Family or Friends (%)	Played for School (%)	Played for a Club (%)
Aerobics/Gymnastics Gymfun	14 (67)	6 (29)	1 (5)	4 (19)
Athletics/Little Athletics	11 (52)	1 (5)	8 (38)	3 (14)
Australian Football/Aussie Footy	8 (38)	4 (19)		
Badminton	14 (67)	3 (14)	1 (5)	2 (10)
Baseball	12 (57)	1 (5)	2 (10)	1 (5)
Basketball/Mini Basketball	15 (71)	7 (33)	6 (29)	5 (24)
Bicycle Riding	1 (5)	13 (62)		
Cricket/Kanga Cricket	16 (76)	6 (29)	5 (24)	2 (10)
Golf	5 (24)	8 (38)		
Hockey/Minkey	13 (62)	3 (15)	8 (38)	5 (24)
Horse Riding	3 (14)	10 (48)	1 (5)	1 (5)
Lacrosse/Sofcrosse	10 (48)			
Netball/Netta Netball	16 (76)	2 (10)	5 (24)	6 (29)
Orienteering	9 (43)	2 (10)	1 (5)	1 (5)
Rugby League/Mod League	9 (43)	2 (10)	1 (5)	3 (14)
Rugby Union/Walla Rugby	3 (14)	1 (5)	1 (5)	
Skating	5 (24)	13 (62)		1 (5)
Skiing	4 (19)	11 (52)	1 (5)	
Soccer/Roo Ball	16 (76)	10 (48)	15 (71)	21 (100)
Softball	16 (76)	1 (5)	9 (43)	1 (5)
Squash/Mini Squash	6 (29)	6 (29)		
Swimming	12 (57)	13 (62)	4 (19)	1 (5)
Tee Ball	13 (62)		1 (5)	1 (5)
Tennis/Ace Tennis	8 (38)	12 (57)	2 (10)	5 (24)
Touch Football	13 (65)	8 (38)	4 (19)	3 (14)
Volleyball	17 (81)	5 (24)	6 (29)	1 (5)
Water Polo	6 (29)	1 (5)	1 (5)	

Table 3.11 Sports Played by Context by 1993 Playing Status - New Players

Sport	Played in Classtime at School (%)	Played with Family or Friends (%)	Played for School (%)	Played for a Club (%)
Aerobics/Gymnastics Gymfun	17 (81)	6 (29)	5 (24)	4 (19)
Athletics/Little Athletics	15 (71)	3 (14)	10 (48)	3 (14)
Australian Football/Aussie Footy	8 (38)	5 (24)	1 (5)	
Badminton	12 (57)	3 (14)	2 (10)	1 (5)
Baseball	10 (48)	3 (14)	4 (19)	
Basketball/Mini Basketball	17 (81)	5 (24)	8 (38)	2 (10)
Bicycle Riding	8 (38)	15 (71)		
Cricket/Kanga Cricket	13 (62)	7 (33)	5 (24)	1 (5)
Golf	8 (38)	4 (19)		
Hockey/Minkey	15 (71)	4 (19)	2 (10)	4 (19)
Horse Riding	4 (19)	12 (57)		2 (10)
Lacrosse/Sofcrosse	9 (43)			
Netball/Netta Netball	15 (71)	7 (33)	11 (52)	7 (33)
Orienteering	6 (29)	1 (5)	1 (5)	
Rugby League/Mod League	4 (19)	3 (14)		1 (5)
Rugby Union/Walla Rugby	1 (5)			
Skating	8 (38)	13 (62)		
Skiing	4 (19)	11 (52)	2 (10)	1 (5)
Soccer/Roo Ball	16 (76)	9 (43)	16 (76)	21 (96)
Softball	16 (76)	5 (24)	5 (24)	7 (33)
Squash/Mini Squash	6 (29)	3 (14)	3 (14)	1 (5)
Swimming	12 (57)	11 (52)	6 (29)	3 (14)
Tee Ball	11 (52)	1 (5)	4 (19)	2 (10)
Tennis/Ace Tennis	14 (67)	10 (48)	2 (10)	6 (29)
Touch Football	12 (57)	7 (33)	4 (19)	4 (19)
Volleyball	16 (76)	6 (29)	7 (33)	1 (5)
Water Polo	2 (10)		1 (5)	1 (5)

Most girls had played on more than one club or school sport team during the last year (Table 3.11). Nearly half had played on three or more teams, just over one quarter had played on four or more teams during the last year (Table 3.11). When playing on these sport teams approximately one third of the girls had played only one sport, another third had played two different sports, and another third had played three or more different sports (Table 3.12).

Table 3.11 Number of Club or School Sport Teams Girls had Played in During the last Year

Number of Teams	Response	Percent
1	23	31
2	17	22
3	15	20
4+	20	27
Total	75	100

Table 3.12 Number of Different Sports Played for a Club or School during the last Year

Number of Teams	Response	Percent
1	27	36
2	22	30
3	13	17
4+	13	17
Total	75	100

Not surprisingly soccer was the sport most commonly mentioned by girls as the sport they had played for a club or for their school during the last year (Table 3.13). For just over one third of the girls this was the only sport played for a club or for their school in the last year (Table 3.12). Netball/netta netball, volleyball and basketball/mini basketball were the next most frequently played sports in this context during this time. When playing a sport for a club or a school in the last twelve months girls generally trained twice a week (Table 3.14) and played in that club or school team once a week (Table 3.15).

Table 3.13 Number of Times Sports Played for a Club or School in Last Year

Sport	Number of Responses	Sport	Number of Responses
Aerobics/Gymnastics	1	Rowing	2
Athletics	4	Rugby 7's	1
Badminton	2	Rugby League	1
Basketball	11	Skating	1
Cricket	4	Skiing	1
Dancing	1	Soccer	98
Dragon Boat Racing	1	Softball	9
Hockey	5	Tennis	3
Horse Riding	1	Touch	6
Indoor Soccer	11	Volleyball	13
Lacrosse	1	Water Polo	2
Netball	15		

Table 3.14 Frequency of Training for Sports Played for a Club or School in Last Year

Frequency of Training each Week	Number of Responses
No Training	10
Once	56
Twice	90
Three or More	17
For a Carnival	12
Occasionally	4

Table 3.15 Frequency of Playing a Game for Sports Played for a Club or School in Last Year

Frequency of Playing a Game each Week	Number of Responses
Less than once	1
Once	123
Twice	23
Three or More	2
For a carnival/round robin	37
Occasionally	2

3.3 Factors Influencing Girls Participation in Soccer

3.31 Beginning to Play Soccer

By the age of thirteen most of the girls had played competitive club sport (Table 3.16). Two age groupings appear to be the most common entry points into competitive club sport - ages 7 & 8 (24%) and again at ages 11 & 12 (27%) (Table 3.16). For withdrawn players however, the proportion of girls who had played competitive club sport at each age group was more similar than for continuing and new players (Table 3.16).

The sport most likely to have been the first sport these girls played competitively for a club was soccer (Table 3.17). Most girls began playing soccer between the ages of 11 and 15 years (Table 3.18). New players showed some variation to this trend with 27% beginning to play soccer at the age of 15 years compared to only 3% of continuing players and 10% of withdrawn players (Table 3.18).

Girls most commonly found out about opportunities to play soccer from other soccer players (Table 3.19). Other sources of information were brother/sisters (23%), teachers (19%), fathers (16%) and representatives of the sport (15%). Approximately one quarter of the girls mentioned more than one source of information about soccer. While for each of the player groups other soccer players were their main source of information about playing soccer, fathers were a source of information for a higher proportion of continuing players (27%) than either withdrawn players (10%) or new players (10%). Brothers/sisters were a a source of information about opportunities to play soccer for a higher proportion of withdrawn players (40%) than for continuing players (23%) or new players (10%) (Table 3.18).

Table 3.16 Age at which Girls began Playing Sport for a Club in a Competition against another Club by 1993 Playing Status

Age (years)	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
5	1 (3)	2 (10)	2 (9)	5 (7)
6	3 (10)	1 (5)		4 (5)
7	5 (17)	2 (10)	1 (5)	8 (11)
8	5 (17)	2 (10)	3 (14)	10 (13)
9	1 (3)	1 (5)	4 (18)	6 (8)
10	1 (3)	2 (10)	1 (5)	4 (5)
11	5 (17)	2 (10)	4 (18)	11 (15)
12	3 (10)	3 (15)	2 (9)	9 (12)
13	2 (7)	3 (15)	2 (9)	7 (9)
14	2 (7)	2 (10)		5 (7)
15	1 (3)		1 (5)	2 (3)
16	1 (3)		1 (5)	2 (3)
17			1 (5)	1 (1)
Total	30 (100)	20(100)	22 (100)	72 (100)

Table 3.17 First Sport Played for a Club by 1993 Playing Status

Sport	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Aerobics/Gymnastics			1 (5)	1 (1)
Athletics/Little Athletics	2 (7)	2 (10)	2 (9)	6 (8)
Australian Football/Aussie Footy	1 (3)			1 (1)
Badminton			1 (5)	1 (1)
Basketball/Mini Basketball	1 (3)	1 (5)		2 (3)
Hockey/Minkey		4 (20)	1 (5)	5 (7)
Netball/Netta Netball	3 (10)	1 (5)	5 (23)	9 (13)
Skiing			1 (5)	1 (1)
Soccer/Roo Ball	14 (47)	6 (30)	5 (23)	25 (35)
Softball	2 (7)	1 (5)		3 (4)
Swimming	3 (10)			3 (4)
Tee Ball			1 (5)	1 (1)
Tennis/Ace Tennis	1 (3)	1 (5)		2 (3)
Touch Football			2 (10)	2 (3)
Indoor Soccer			1 (5)	1 (1)
Marching		1 (5)		1 (1)
Soccer & Athletics		1 (5)		1 (1)
Athletics & Softball		1 (5)		1 (1)
Basketball & Netball			1 (5)	1 (1)
Netball & Teeball			1 (5)	1 (1)
Netball & Soccer		1 (5)		1 (1)
Soccer & Softball	1 (3)			1 (1)
Soccer & Swimming	1 (3)			1 (1)
Softball & Netball	1 (3)			1 (1)
Total	30 (100)	20 (100)	22 (100)	72 (100)

Table 3.18 Age at which Girls began Playing Soccer by 1993 Playing Status

Age (years)	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
5	1 (3)		1 (3)	2 (3)
6		1 (5)		1 (1)
7		2 (10)		2 (3)
8	2 (7)	1 (5)		3 (4)
9		1 (5)		1 (1)
10	3 (10)	1 (5)	2 (9)	6 (8)
11	6 (20)	3 (14)	2 (9)	11 (15)
12	6 (20)	3 (14)	2 (9)	11 (15)
13	5 (17)	2 (10)	3 (14)	10 (13)
14	5 (17)	2 (10)	2 (9)	9 (12)
15	1 (3)	2 (10)	6 (27)	9 (12)
16	1 (3)		3 (14)	4 (5)
17			1 (5)	1 (1)
18		2 (10)		2 (3)
Not Given		1 (5)		1 (1)
Total	30 (100)	21 (100)	22 (100)	73 (100)

Table 3.19 Where Girls Heard about Playing Soccer by 1993 Playing Status

Where Girls Heard About Playing Soccer	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
From their Mum	3 (10)	2 (10)		5 (7)
From a Teacher	5 (17)	4 (20)	5 (24)	14 (19)
From a Representative of the Sport	5 (17)	4 (20)	2 (10)	11 (15)
From a Player	12 (40)	10 (50)	12 (57)	34 (49)
From their Dad	8 (27)	2 (10)	2 (10)	12 (16)
From a Newspaper	1 (3)	1 (5)		2 (3)
From Brother/Sister	7 (23)	8 (40)	2 (10)	17 (23)
From a Club Official	1 (3)	2 (10)		3 (4)
From a Non-soccer Playing Friend	1 (3)	1 (5)	1 (5)	3 (4)

3.32 Factors Encouraging Girls to Play Soccer

For all girls playing soccer was fun (Tables 3.20 & 3.21). Most girls also played soccer because "it makes you feel good" (89%) and "you can make new friends " (80%) (Table 3.20). Few girls chose to play soccer because it helped them with their schoolwork, they could play with their parents or because the risk of injury was low (Table 3.20). While having a mother

Table 3.20 Ranked Reasons Girls Play Soccer

Reason	Yes (%)	Rank
It's fun	73 (100)	1
It makes you feel good	66 (89)	2
You make new friends that way	57 (80)	3
The coach is good	51 (71)	4
People in this sport are really friendly	48 (67)	5
It's something to do	46 (65)	6
My friends play it too	42 (57)	7
My parents encourage me to play	34 (46)	8.5
I am really good at this sport	32 (45)	8.5
Girls and boys can play it together	31 (43)	10
My teachers encouraged me to play this sport	26 (37)	11
I saw it played on television	22 (31)	12
I do not have to travel far to play it	18 (25)	13
You can make a good living from this sport	17 (24)	14
My dad plays, or used to play this sport	17 (23)	15
It makes you look good	16 (22)	16
I knew the coach	14 (20)	17
It does not cost a lot to play	14 (19)	18
I am not likely to be injured	10 (14)	19
It helps you do well at schoolwork	9 (13)	20
I play this sport with my parents	7 (10)	21
I do not have to go to training	5 (7)	22
My Mum plays, or used to play, this sport	1 (1)	23

Table 3.21 Reasons Girls Play Soccer by 1993 Playing Status

Reason	1993 Playing Status (%)		
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New
My friends play it too	18 (62)	12 (57)	12 (55)
My parents encourage me to play	16 (55)	7 (33)	10 (46)
I do not have to travel far to play it	9 (31)	4 (19)	4 (19)
Girls & boys can play it together	14 (50)	8 (38)	7 (33)
My mum plays, or used to play this sport	1(3)		
It does not cost a lot to play	4 (14)	6 (29)	4 (20)
I am really good at this sport	12 (44)	10 (48)	7 (33)
I do not have to go to training	2 (7)	3 (14)	
It makes you feel good	26 (90)	18 (86)	20 (91)
The coach is good	21 (75)	13 (62)	17 (81)
I am no likely to be injured	1 (3)	4 (19)	4 (19)
My dad plays, or used to play, this sport	10 (33)	4 (19)	3 (14)
It makes you look good	7 (24)	4 (20)	4 (20)
People in this sport are really friendly	21 (72)	8 (40)	16 (76)
My teachers encouraged me to play this sport	9 (31)	9 (45)	7 (35)
You can make a good living from playing this sport	6 (21)	4 (20)	5 (25)
It's fun	30 (100)	20 (100)	21 (100)
I saw it played on television	10 (35)	6 (30)	6 (30)
It helps you to do well at schoolwork	5 (17)	1 (5)	3 (15)
I play this sport with my parents	4 (14)	2 (10)	1 (5)
You make new friends that way	23 (79)	16 (80)	15 (75)
I knew the coach	9 (31)	4 (20)	1 (5)
It's something to do	21 (72)	12 (60)	11 (55)

who plays, or used to play, soccer led only one girl to play soccer, having a father who plays, or used to play soccer, led 23% of girls to choose to play soccer.

Reasons for choosing to play soccer generally showed little variation between girls in each of the player groups. Interestingly, however, the proportion of withdrawn players who chose to play soccer because people in that sport were really friendly was lower than the proportion of continuing and new players who mentioned this reason (Table 3.21). The question thus arises as to whether when girls sense this element is absent from a sport, they leave and look for another 'more friendly' soccer club or another sport.

3.33 Parents' Involvement in Sport

In this study parents' personal sport participation as players, coaches and managers was investigated, along with their involvement in their daughters' sports participation. Parents can become involved in their children's sport by regularly transporting them to games or training, helping them practise their sport at home and regularly watching them play.

A higher proportion of fathers (46%) than mothers (25%) had played sport for a club in a competition against another club (Table 3.22). Both parents' sport participation was currently at a much lower level than in the past. Only 4% of mothers and 6% of fathers currently played sport for a club in a competition against another club (Table 3.22). Parents' past involvement in sport as coaches or managers of a sport team was also low (Table 3.22). Few mothers or fathers currently coached or managed a sports team (Table 3.22).

Table 3.22 Girls' Parents' Sport Involvement

Statement	Mother (%)		Father (%)	
	In the Past	During the last Year	In the Past	During the last Year
Played for a club in a competition against another club	18 (25)	3 (4)	33 (46)	4 (6)
Coached a sport team	11 (15)	3 (4)	17 (23)	6 (8)
Managed a sport team	11 (15)	4 (6)	9 (13)	8 (11)
Regularly transported you to games or training	45 (62)	31 (43)	36 (50)	28 (38)
Helped you at home to practise your sport	11(15)	8 (11)	19 (26)	17 (23)
Regularly watched you play	39 (53)	28 (38)	29 (40)	20 (27)
Taken you to watch adults play sport	14 (19)	10 (14)	21 (29)	16 (22)

In the past parents when involved in their daughters' sport, had regularly transported them to games and training and watched them play (Table 3.22). A higher proportion of mothers (62%) than fathers (50%) had regularly transported their daughters to a game or training (Table 3.22). During the last year the proportion of both fathers and mothers involved in transporting their daughters to games or training was lower than in the past (Table 3.22). Similarly, a higher proportion of mothers (53%) than fathers (40%) had regularly watched their daughter play sport, but this proportion had fallen off during the last year (Table 2.22).

The decline that has occurred during the last year in parents' roles as transporters and spectators was not evident in their level of involvement in their daughters' sport practice at home, which continues to remain at a low level (Table 3.22). Few mothers helped their daughters practise their sport at home either in the past (15%) or currently (11%) (Table 3.22).

However, the proportion of fathers assisting with sport practice at home was higher both in the past and currently than the proportion of mothers who did so (Table 3.22). Fewer mothers than fathers had, both in the past and during the last year, taken their daughter to watch adults play sport (Table 3.22).

Parents personal sport participation and involvement in their daughters' sport was investigated for each player type (continuing, withdrawn, new). Mothers of girls in each player grouping exhibited similar participation behaviour. Approximately one quarter of mothers of girls in each player group had played competitive club sport in the past. Few played during the last year. Similarly low proportions had coached or managed a sport team in the past and even fewer had done so in the last year (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25).

Table 3.23 Girls' Parents' Sport Involvement by Girls' 1993 Playing Status - Continuing Players

Statement	Mother (%)		Father (%)	
	In the Past	During the last Year	In the Past	During the last Year
Played for a club in a competition against another club	8 (27)	1 (3)	16 (53)	4 (13)
Coached a sport team	6 (20)	2 (7)	9 (30)	6 (20)
Managed a sport team	5 (17)	2 (7)	7 (23)	7 (23)
Regularly transported you to games or training	17 (57)	13 (43)	14 (47)	14 (47)
Helped you at home to practise your sport	4 (13)	3 (10)	9 (30)	8 (27)
Regularly watched you play	18 (60)	12 (40)	14 (47)	10 (33)
Taken you to watch adults play sport	6 (20)	5 (17)	10 (33)	10 (33)

Table 3.24 Girls' Parents Sport Involvement by Girls' 1993 Playing Status - Withdrawn Players

Statement	Mother (%)		Father (%)	
	In the Past	During the last Year	In the Past	During the last Year
Played for a club in a competition against another club	5 (25)	2 (10)	11 (55)	
Coached a sport team	3 (15)		5 (25)	
Managed a sport team	3 (15)		1 (5)	
Regularly transported you to games or training	18 (90)	10 (50)	15 (75)	8 (40)
Helped you at home to practise your sport	5 (24)	4 (20)	5 (25)	4 (20)
Regularly watched you play	13 (65)	7 (35)	9 (45)	4 (20)
Taken you to watch adults play sport	4 (20)	4 (20)	6 (30)	4 (20)

Fathers' personal sport participation did show some variation with respect to their daughters' 1993 playing status. While approximately half of the fathers of continuing and withdrawn players had played competitive club sport in the past, only 30% of fathers of new players had played competitive club sport in the past (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25). A higher proportion of fathers of continuing players than fathers of both withdrawn and new players had managed a sport team in the past (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25). While a few fathers of continuing players had during the last year played competitive club sport, managed or coached a sport team, fathers of withdrawn and new players had not personally participated in these ways (Tables 3.23 to 3.25).

While mothers involvement in their daughters' sport participation continued to be as transporters and spectators some differences in past involvement for mothers of each of the player types was noticeable. The proportion of mothers of withdrawn players who had regularly transported their daughters to games or training (90%) was higher than the proportion of continuing players mothers (57%) and new players mothers (43%) (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25). Similar proportions of mothers of girls in each of the player groups currently provide transport (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 23.5). Currently, similar proportions of mothers of girls of each player type watch their daughter play sport (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25). In the past, 65% of the mothers of withdrawn players had regularly watched their daughter play sport compared to only 30% of new players' mothers (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25).

The proportion of fathers of continuing and new players who regularly transported their daughters to games or training during the past year was similar to the proportion who had done so in the past (Tables 3.23, 3.24 & 3.25). The proportion of withdrawn players' fathers who provided transport in the past was higher than the proportion of continuing players fathers, which was in turn higher than the proportion of new players' fathers who had regularly provided transport to games or training (Tables 3.23 3.24 & 3.25).

Table 3.25 Girls' Parents' Sport Involvement by Girls' 1993 Playing Status - New Players

Statement	Mother		Father	
	In the Past (%)	During the last Year (%)	In the Past(%)	During the last Year (%)
Played for a club in a competition against another club	5 (24)		6 (30)	
Coached a sport team	2 (10)	1 (5)	3 (14)	
Managed a sport team	3 (14)	2 (10)	1 (5)	1 (5)
Regularly transported you to games or training	9 (43)	8 (38)	5 (25)	5 (24)
Helped you at home to practise your sport	2 (10)	1 (5)	5 (25)	5 (24)
Regularly watched you play	8 (38)	9 (43)	5 (25)	5 (24)
Taken you to watch adults play sport	4 (19)	1 (5)	5 (25)	2 (10)

3.34 The Coach

Coaches of most players were males (Table 3.26). The proportion of continuing players (87%) and withdrawn players (66%) coached by a male was higher than the proportion of new players (46%) with a male coach (Table 3.26). It was equally as likely that the coach of a new player be female as male (Table 3.26).

Table 3.26 Gender of Coach by Girls' 1993 Playing Status

Gender of Coach	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Male	26 (87)	14 (66)	10 (46)	50 (69)
Female	4 (13)	5 (24)	11 (50)	20 (27)
No Answer		2 (10)	1 (4)	3 (4)
Total	30 (100)	21 (100)	22 (100)	73 (100)

Players felt their coaches exhibited many positive attributes and behaviours. Coaches were friendly (93%), helped players get fit (96%), knew a lot about soccer (96%) and helped develop players' soccer skills (94%) (Table 3.27). Few coaches wanted to win at all costs (14%), only put good players on the field (13%), yelled at players if they made a mistake (18%) or embarrassed players during a game or training (7%) (Table 3.27). While most coaches made training fun, the proportion who were able to do so (62%) was lower than the proportion who exhibited other positive behaviours (Table 3.27). No players felt their coach would prefer to coach only boys.

Continuing, withdrawn and new players generally expressed similar feelings about their coach. One exception occurred with respect to the coach's behaviour when players made a mistake. While nearly one quarter of new players and continuing players felt their coach yelled at them when they made a mistake, no withdrawn players felt their coach yelled in such circumstances (Tables 3.27).

Table 3.27 Coach's Attributes by Girls' 1993 Playing Status

Coach's Attributes	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Helps develop my soccer skills	28 (93)	18 (95)	21 (100)	67 (94)
Wants to win at all costs	4 (13)	2 (11)	3 (15)	9 (14)
Knows a lot about soccer	30 (100)	17 (90)	21 (100)	68 (96)
Only puts the good players on the field	4 (13)	3 (16)	1 (5)	8 (13)
Makes Training fun	18 (60)	11 (61)	14 (67)	43 (62)
Yells at me if I make a mistake	7 (23)		5 (24)	12 (18)
Helps me get fit	28 (93)	18 (100)	20 (95)	66 (96)
Is friendly	28 (97)	18 (95)	18 (86)	64 (93)
Embarrasses me during training/game	4 (13)		1 (5)	5 (7)

Coach's attributes and behaviours were also examined in relation to the gender of the coach. A small difference in the attributes of male and female coaches appeared in three areas. One fifth of the players felt female coaches wanted to win at all costs (Table 3.29). Only 11% of players felt male coaches adopted this attitude to winning (Table 3.28). A slightly higher proportion of players felt male coaches were friendly and made training fun (Tables 23.8 & 3.29).

Players' preference for a coach of a particular gender was not strongly weighted towards either male or female coaches (Table 3.30). Just under half the players expressed no preference, one third preferred a male coach and one fifth a female coach (Table 3.30).

Table 3.28 Coach's Attributes by Girls' 1993 Playing Status by Gender of Coach - Male Coach

Coach's Attributes	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Total (%)
Helps develop my soccer skills	49 (94)	3 (6)		52 (100)
Wants to win at all costs	6 (11)	45 (87)	1 (2)	52 (100)
Knows a lot about soccer	50 (96)	2 (4)		52 (100)
Only puts the good players on the field	7 (14)	45 (87)		52 (100)
Makes Training fun	33 (65)	15 (29)	3 (6)	51 (100)
Yells at me if I make a mistake	10 (19)	40 (77)	2 (4)	52 (100)
Helps me get fit	49 (96)	2 (4)		51 (100)
Would prefer to coach only boys	1 (2)	50 (98)		51 (100)
Is friendly	49 (96)	2 (4)		51 (100)
Embarrasses me during training/game	4 (8)	47 (90)	1 (2)	52 (100)

Table 3.29 Coach's Attributes by Girls' 1993 Playing Status by Gender of Coach - Female Coach

Coach's Attributes	Yes(%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Total(%)
Helps develop my soccer skills	19 (95)	1 (5)		20 (100)
Wants to win at all costs	4 (21)	14 (74)	1 (5)	19 (100)
Knows a lot about soccer	19 (95)	1 (5)		20 (100)
Only puts the good players on the field	2 (10)	18 (90)		20 (100)
Makes training fun	11 (55)	9 (45)		20 (100)
Yells at me if I make a mistake	3 (15)	16 (80)	1 (5)	20 (100)
Helps me get fit	19 (95)	1 (5)		20 (100)
Would prefer to coach only boys		19 (100)		19 (100)
Is friendly	17 (85)	1 (5)	2 (10)	20 (100)
Embarrasses me during training/game	1 (5)	18 (90)	1 (5)	20 (100)

Table 3.30 Players' Gender Preference for their Coach by their 1993 Playing Status

Gender Preference for their Coach	1993 Playing Status (%)			Total (%)
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Male	11 (42)	6 (32)	6 (30)	23 (34)
Female	3 (12)	4 (21)	6 (30)	13 (21)
No Preference	12 (46)	9 (47)	8 (40)	29 (45)
Total	26 (100)	19(100)	20 (100)	65 (100)

3.35 Peer Reactions to Girls Playing Sport

While most players felt boys and other girls were supportive when playing sport with them, boys were generally less supportive than other girls. Other girls supported them by:

- encouraging them to play sport (88%);
- choosing them to play on their team (93%);
- saying they were good at sport (85%);
- saying it was appropriate for girls to play sport (96%);
- helping them to play better (88%); and
- playing to the rules (78%) (Tables 3.31 & 3.32).

Few other girls took playing sport too seriously (14%) or always said they were better players (7%) (Table 3.32). Few players were laughed at by other girls or heard other girls making jokes about them while they played sport (Table 3.32).

While boys were generally supportive of the girls when playing sport with them, the proportion of boys exhibiting positive behaviours was lower and the proportion exhibiting negative reactions higher, than the corresponding proportion of other girls. For example:

- 93% of players said other girls chose them to play on their team while only 69% of girls felt they would be chosen by a boy to play in his team;
- 85% of girls felt other girls said they were good at sport; only 63% felt boys would say this; and
- 88% of girls believed other girls helped them to play better, only 66% felt that when they played sport with boys the boys would help them to play better (Tables 3.31 & 3.32).

Table 3.31 Respondents' Perceptions of Boys' Reactions to Girls Playing Sport

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Both (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	59 (80)	14 (19)	1 (1)		74 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	49 (69)	19 (27)		3 (4)	71 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	16 (22)	55 (74)	1 (1)	2 (3)	74 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	44 (63)	23 (33)	2 (3)	1 (1)	70 (100)
Take it too seriously	34 (46)	39 (53)	1 (1)		74 (100)
Play to the rules	48 (65)	24 (32)		2 (3)	74 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	55 (79)	12 (17)	3 (4)		70 (100)
Help me to play better	46 (66)	22 (31)		2 (3)	70 (100)
Always say they are better than me	26 (36)	46 (63)	1 (1)		73 (100)

Table 3.32 Respondents' Perceptions of Other Girls' Reactions to Playing Sport with them

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Both (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	65 (88)	8 (11)	1 (1)		74 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	68 (93)	3 (4)	1 (1)	1 (1)	73 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	5 (7)	66 (90)		2 (3)	73 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	61 (85)	10 (14)		1 (1)	72 (100)
Take it too seriously	10 (14)	63 (86)			73 (100)
Play to the rules	57 (78)	14 (19)		2 (3)	73 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	67 (96)	3 (4)			70 (100)
Help me to play better	63 (88)	8 (11)		1 (1)	72 (100)
Always say they are better than me	5 (7)	66 (92)	1 (1)		72 (100)

The proportion of girls who felt that boys take sport too seriously (46%) was noticeably higher than the proportion who thought other girls took sport too seriously (14%) (Tables 3.31 & 3.32). A higher proportion of girls felt boys laughed and made jokes about them playing sport (22%) than felt other girls would do this (7%) (Tables 3.31 & 3.32). Just over one third of the girls felt boys always said they were better than them while only 7% of girls felt other girls always said they were better at sport (Tables 3.31 & 3.32).

There were also some differences between the proportion of girls in each player group with respect to their feelings about some of the attitudes and actions of boys when they played sport with them. For example:

- the proportion of withdrawn players chosen by boys to play in their teams (80%) was higher than the proportion of continuing players (67%) and new players (64%) who said boys would choose them to play on their team;

Table 3.33 Continuing Players' Perceptions of Boys' Reactions to Girls Playing Sport

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Some-times(%)	Both (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	26 (90)	2 (7)	1 (3)		29 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	18 (67)	8 (30)		1 (4)	27 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	7 (24)	22 (76)			29 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	17 (61)	9 (32)	2 (7)		28 (100)
Take it too seriously	11 (38)	17 (59)	1 (3)		29 (100)
Play to the rules	25 (83)	5 (17)			30 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	22 (82)	3 (11)	2 (7)		27 (100)
Help me to play better	18(67)	9 (33)			27 (100)
Always say they are better than me	8 (27)	21 (70)	1 (3)		30 (100)

Table 3.34 Continuing Players' Perceptions of Other Girls' Reactions to Playing Sport with them

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	27 (93)	1 (3)	1 (3)	29 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	26 (90)	2 (7)	1 (3)	29 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	2 (7)	26 (93)		28 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	24 (86)	4 (14)		28 (100)
Take it too seriously	3 (11)	25 (89)		28 (100)
Play to the rules	26 (90)	3 (10)		29 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	26 (96)	1 (4)		27 (100)
Help me to play better	26 (93)	2 (7)		28 (100)
Always say they are better than me	3 (10)	25 (86)	1 (3)	29 (100)

Table 3.35 Withdrawn Players' Perceptions of Boys' Reactions to Girls Playing Sport

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	18 (86)	3 (14)		21 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	16 (80)	4 (20)		20 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	3 (14)	18 (86)		21 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	17 (90)	2 (10)		19 (100)
Take it too seriously	9 (43)	12 (57)		21 (100)
Play to the rules	12 (57)	9 (43)		21 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	17 (85)	2 (10)	1 (5)	20 (100)
Help me to play better	15 (75)	5 (25)		20 (100)
Always say they are better than me	6 (30)	14 (70)		20 (100)

Table 3.36 Withdrawn Players' Perceptions of Other Girls' Reactions to Playing Sport with them

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	18 (86)	3 (14)	21 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	19 (95)	1 (5)	20 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	2 (9)	19 (91)	21 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	19 (95)	1 (5)	20 (100)
Take it too seriously	2 (9)	19 (91)	21 (100)
Play to the rules	15 (71)	6 (29)	21 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	19 (95)	1 (5)	20 (100)
Help me to play better	16 (76)	5 (24)	21 (100)
Always say they are better than me		20 (100)	20 (100)

- the proportion of withdrawn players who felt boys said they were good at sport (90%) was higher than the proportion of continuing players (61%) who felt boys said this which was in turn higher than the proportion of new players (43%) who felt boys said they were good at sport;
- a higher proportion of continuing players (83%) felt boys play to the rules than withdrawn players (57%) and new players (48%); and
- a higher proportion of new players (90%) felt boys help them play better compared to 76% of withdrawn players and 67% of continuing players (Tables 3.33 to 3.38).

When the actions and attitudes of other girls were examined in relation to the responses of each of the player groups a noticeable variation in the proportion of girls in each player group occurred for only one action, playing to the rules. Only one third of new players and 71% of withdrawn players felt other girls played to the rules when playing sport with them compared to 90% of continuing players who felt this (Tables 3.34, 3.36 & 3.38).

Table 3.37 New Players' Perceptions of Boys' Reactions to Girls Playing Sport

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Some-times(%)	Both (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	14 (64)	8 (36)			22 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	14 (64)	6 (27)		2 (9)	22 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	4 (18)	15 (68)	1 (5)	2 (9)	22 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	9 (43)	11 (52)		1 (5)	21 (100)
Take it too seriously	12 (55)	10 (45)			22 (100)
Play to the rules	10 (48)	9 (43)		2 (9)	21 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	15 (71)	6 (29)			21 (100)
Help me to play better	11 (52)	8 (38)		2 (10)	21 (100)
Always say they are better than me	11 (52)	10 (48)			21 (100)

Table 3.38 New Players' Perceptions of Other Girls' Reactions to Playing Sport with them

Attitude	Yes (%)	No (%)	Both (%)	Total (%)
Encourage me to play sport	18 (82)	4 (18)		22 (100)
Choose me to play on their team	21 (96)		1 (4)	22 (100)
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	1 (5)	19 (86)	2 (9)	22 (100)
Say I'm good at sport	16 (73)	5 (23)	1 (4)	22 (100)
Take it too seriously	3 (14)	19 (86)		22 (100)
Play to the rules	14 (67)	5 (23)	2(10)	21 (100)
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	20 (95)	1 (5)		21 (100)
Help me to play better	19 (90)	1 (5)	1 (5)	21 (100)
Always say they are better than me	1 (5)	20 (95)		21 (100)

3.36 Factors Discouraging Girls from Playing Soccer

Just over half the girls who were no longer playing soccer were discouraged from playing soccer by having lots of homework (Table 3.39). Factors relating to the coaches, friends, parents, cost, injury and characteristics of the game had discouraged very few of these girls from playing soccer. Having more interesting things to do and having to travel all over the place to play matches discouraged 29% of girls in this group from playing soccer (Table 3.39).

Table 3.39 Reasons which Discouraged Girls in the Withdrawn Players Group from Playing Soccer

Reason	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
My studies (lots of homework)	12 (57)	9 (43)	21 (100)
Having a poor coach	4 (19)	17 (81)	21 (100)
It costs too much money	2 (10)	19 (90)	21 (100)
Having to practise too much	1 (5)	20 (95)	21 (100)
The risk of being injured	1 (5)	20 (95)	21 (100)
Having more interesting things to do	6 (29)	15 (71)	21 (100)
My team losing all the time	1 (5)	20 (95)	21 (100)
Poor umpiring	2 (10)	19 (90)	21 (100)
Having barrackers & coaches yelling at me all the time	1 (5)	20 (95)	21 (100)
The season being too long		21 (100)	21 (100)
Having to travel all over the place to play matches	6 (29)	15 (71)	21 (100)
Coaches not really being interested in the players, just being interested in winning	3 (14)	18 (86)	21 (100)
The coach only putting the good players into the game, so that I miss out	1 (5)	20 (95)	21 (100)
My friends not being interested in sport	3 (14)	18 (86)	21 (100)
My parents thinking I should not play so much sport	4 (19)	17 (81)	21 (100)
There being nowhere near where I live to play the sport I would like to play	3 (14)	18 (86)	21 (100)
Having to do other things than play, for example, umpiring, scoring	2 (10)	19 (90)	21 (100)

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3.4 Summary

- Responses were received from 79 players, a response rate of 75%. The response rate was particularly pleasing since the original sample of 105 girls was found to contain only 89 contactable players.

- Players completing the questionnaire represented ten different clubs.

- Girls in each player group were spread over the key adolescent years (Grades 8 to 12, ages 13 to 18 years) where previous research has shown girls dissatisfaction with sport is at its highest.

- It was of interest to note that most girls were Australian born, as were their parents (although to a lesser extent).

- The data on sports played confirms the importance of context when discussing girls sport participation. Girls had played a wide variety of sports during classtime at school. When with family or friends girls participated in different activities from those they took part in during classtime at school. Apart from soccer, participation levels in representative school sport and competitive club sport were lower than in other contexts. The most popular sports played by girls in each context were similar to those recently reported in a mapping of junior sport in the ACT (Clough & Traill, 1992b).

- Most girls had played on more than one club or school sport team during the last year. When playing on these teams two thirds of the girls played on two or more different teams. Teams generally trained twice a week and played once a week.

- By the age of 13 years most girls had played competitive club sport, most commonly beginning at ages 7 and 8 years and 11 and 12 years of age. Soccer was the sport most likely to have been the first competitive sport played by these girls.

- Other soccer players were most often a source of information about opportunities to play soccer. Other family members, particularly brothers/sisters and fathers were also a source of information about soccer.

- The issues of enjoyment and friendship stood out as key elements in girls decision to play soccer.

- Data on the involvement of players' parents in sport suggests a more passive role for mothers (as transporters and spectators) compared to fathers' more active roles as players or assisting their daughter to practise at home. Past involvement in sport for both parents had been at a higher level than their more recent involvement in all aspects considered but was particularly noticeable in their participation in competitive club sport as players.

- Most coaches of continuing and withdrawn players were male. Coaches of new players were equally likely to be female as male. Players felt coaches exhibited many positive attributes and actions at training and during games. The very positive view of coaches suggested by this study contrasts to the 'win at all costs' attitude of coaches reported in other studies (for example, Clough and Traill, 1992b). This view of coaches seemed generally, to be unrelated to the gender of the coach, though a slightly higher proportion of girls felt female rather than male coaches adopted the 'win at all costs' attitude.

- Players' preference for a coach of a particular gender was not strongly weighted towards either a male or female coach.

- Players felt other girls were more supportive of them playing sport than were boys. Girls felt boys were less likely to select them to play on their team, acknowledge their sporting skills and help them to improve their game. Boys were more likely to take sport too seriously and to laugh and make jokes at them while they played sport.

- Factors linked to girls withdrawal from sport in other studies (for example, Clough and Traill, 1992b) such as coach's choice of players, attitude to winning and coaching ability were not key issues in this study. Rather, players' withdrawal seems to be related to their studies in particular, and a desire to do more interesting things and the extent of travelling required to play soccer in the ACT.

4. Girls Soccer Experiences

4.1 Introduction

Wishing to give voice in the text to both the researchers and the players, each of the themes chosen for inclusion in this chapter is presented under two headings - Players' Perspective and Researchers' Perspective. While recognising we couldn't present everything every player said, or everything we as researchers have come to know, our commitment to the view that an interview is a dialogue, a two-way process, necessitated the inclusion of the voices of all participants. Our analysis drew the following themes from the experiences of the girls and young women playing soccer in the ACT:

- Gender Connotations of Sport
- "Soccer is a Social Thing"
- Influence of Significant Others
- Image
- Sport as Part of Life

4.2 GENDER CONNOTATIONS OF SPORT

4.21 Sports Girls Play

Players' Perspective

Question: Do you think most girls of your age play sport?

Response (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Yes	5	4	2	11
No			2	2
Don't Know		1	1	2
Total	5	5	5	15

Question: What sports do girls generally play?

Sport (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Netball	3	6	5	14
Gymnastics	1			1
Indoor Soccer	1			1
Volleyball	1	2		3
Softball	4	2	1	7
Soccer	3	4	1	8
Tennis	1		2	3
Cricket	1		1	2
Athletics	1			1
Basketball	3	2		5
Hockey		4	1	5
Gym Workout		1		1
Touch		2		2
Water Polo		1		1

Question: Are there sports girls are expected to play?

Response (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Yes	4	1	5	10
No/Not Really	1	4		5
Total	5	5	5	15

Question: What sports are girls expected to play?

Sports (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Netball	4	2	3	9
Gymnastics/Aerobics	2	1		3
Basketball	1			1
Softball			2	2
Hockey			2	2
Swimming		1	1	2

Question: Are there sports girls are not expected to play?

Response (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Yes	3	3	3	9
No/Not Really	2	2	1	5
Total	5	5	4*	14

*one player did not respond to this question

Question: What sports are girls not expected to play?

Sports (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Rugby League/Union	3	3	2	8
Baseball	1			1
Cricket	1			1
Soccer	1			1
American Football		1		1
Ice Hockey		1		1
Australian Football			1	1

Researchers' Perspective

Players felt most girls of their age played sport:

"most of my friends do ... yes I'd say a majority would".

"know heaps of people who do, like, sports with balls".

"Yes, I think so. We have to at school, and its a good fun thing to do".

While all continuing players and a majority of withdrawn players felt this, new players were evenly divided between those who agreed with the statement "most girls of your age play sport" and those who disagreed with this statement.

Netball topped the list of sports mentioned by the players as those played by most girls of their age. "Netball I guess is the main one they play ... a lot of girls are brought up on netball".

Softball was the next most frequently mentioned sport followed by basketball, hockey and volleyball. As soccer players, it was not surprising to find soccer near the top of the list. Netball's position, well in front of the next most popular sport, and the small number of sports played by more than a few girls, suggests girls play a limited range of sports.

Most girls felt there were sports girls were expected to play and sports they were not expect to play. However, they felt these expectations applied to other girls but not necessarily to themselves. Netball and gymnastics/aerobics were mentioned most frequently as sports girls were expected to play:

"you'll say netball and people will think of girls".

"all girls are expected to play netball ... men aren't expected to do dance".

Players felt girls were not expected to play rugby league/union/american football, some included soccer in this category:

"A friend of mine is not allowed to play soccer because her parents say its a boys sport".

"soccer is like the guys game and netball is more of a girls game".

"a lot of people look on sports like rugby league and rugby union as kind of taboo because they're so rough and violent. Females are not supposed to get involved in violent situations".

"definitely, you're not expected to play soccer".

Some of those players who said there were no sports girls were expected to play, or not play, were aware of specific reactions from others (particularly boys) when they played certain sports or that there were particular sports girls tended to play, ie. they were aware of others expectations of the sports girls should or should not play.

"They are not expected to play but most girls would probably go for netball".

"Aren't any sports girls are not supposed to do but boys influence girls negatively when girls try to do certain sports".

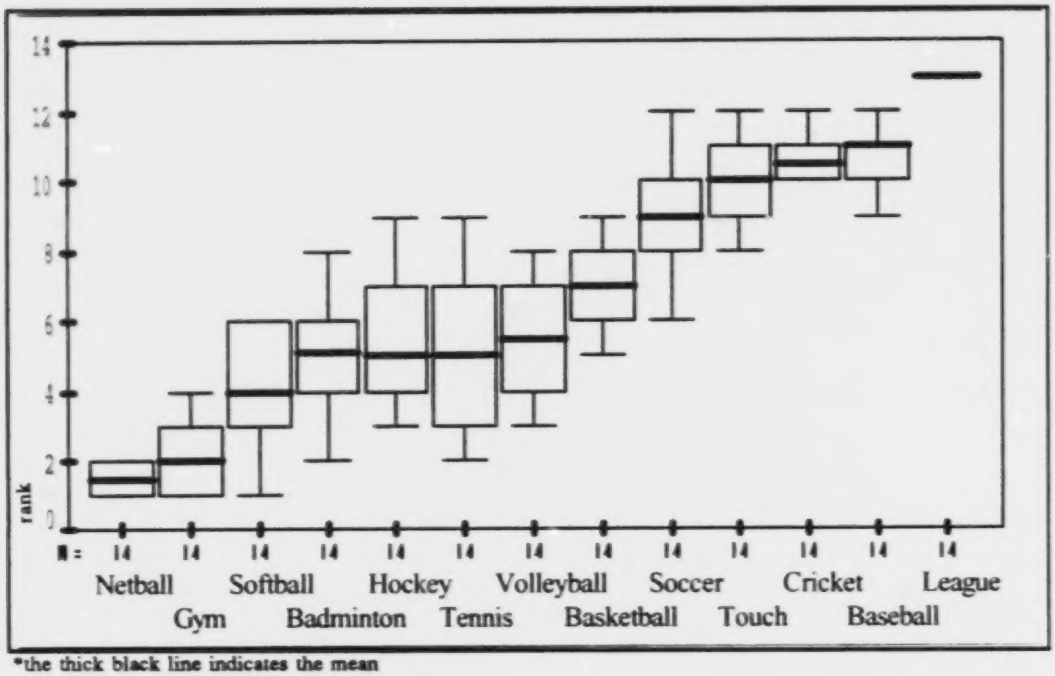
"They're not expected to play anything. But if they play soccer or something like that (pause) I used to get heaps of shit from guys like, ,Oh that's a guy's game' ".

While four withdrawn players answered the question 'Are there any sports girls are expected to play?' negatively, only two of these players felt there were no sports girls were not expected to play. "I don't think girls should not play any sport, I mean they've got the right to play it especially if its against other women". One new player expressed a similar viewpoint, "anyone can play any type of sport ... you've just to get out there and try it".

4.22 Girls Gender Perceptions of Sports

Players' Perspective

Mean* Ranking of Sports on a Scale of Most Feminine (1) to Least Feminine (13)



*the thick black line indicates the mean

Researchers' Perspective

Some sports seem to be central to girls perceptions of the gender differentiation of sport, others more peripheral. A higher degree of certainty was apparent in the gender connotations of sports such as netball, gymnastics/aerobics, rugby league, touch, cricket and baseball than was the case for other sports such as basketball, volleyball, tennis and badminton. For example, ranks at both extremes (2 & 11) and some from the middle were assigned to basketball. Perhaps basketball is a sport where gender boundaries are under negotiation. The position assigned to soccer by most players was towards the masculine end of the scale (9 to 13), though three players assigned a middle rank to soccer (6-8). Each players' ranking of each sport is presented in Appendix 6.

Girls certainty with regard to the gender connotations of particular sports could be observed as they assigned ranks to the sports on the list. Rather than working from 1 through to 13, most girls quickly assigned the ranks at the extremes (1 & 2 and 11, 12 & 13) before more slowly assigning the middle ranks.

4.23 Gender Characteristics of Sports

Players' Perspective

Equipment/Playing Space

"at school we've got girls softball teams and guys baseball teams, its never guys softball and girls baseball. Its always girls softball and guys baseball because softball is obviously a much lighter sport, its got a lighter ball, lighter bats and that because people get the impression that girls are not as strong and, you know, as tough as the guys and, you know, we're all soft so we need soft things"

"[the] netball court is tiny compared to soccer, the guys think that they're stronger than we are, we get smaller netball courts, they get bigger soccer fields"

"softball's a lot easier to play ... baseball's a lot harder I think, different rules ... softball's underarm throws"

Teachers' Expectations

"some of the teachers are like that, they think, oh girls aren't good enough to play this because its always been a guys sport"

"we said we'd like a girls soccer team and he [the teacher] said we don't think you're qualified"

Physical Contact

[feminine sports are] "basically the ones that are all non-contact"

"I think its about contact how much contact there is in the sport. More in male sport"

"Well say badminton, its not a physical sport, you'll just see women playing it, its non-contact. They're playing that 'cos they won't get hurt or something"

"Rugby because you're always doing hits and stuff, and it hurts!!"

"I suppose most of the ones girls aren't expected to play are more physical contact, like rugby league and soccer's more contact then netball"

"I think it's about how rough, and the amount of contact"

"Rugby - physical contact - whereas girls' sports don't have much contact ie. netball (three feet rule). Cricket, there is a lot of power in cricket. Throwing the distance"

Competitiveness/Aggression/Win at all Costs/Take it too seriously

"there's not that same competition [in girls teams] as there is in the boys' teams"

Males "get into [sport] really hard, there's no prize for losers, um, you've got to win, you've got to win, get in there as hard as you possibly can, that kind of really aggressive, very, very, competitive attitude, I think, its a really masculine thing ... the way they do it is to an extreme". In netball "the coach will say you've got to win, but cover it by saying its OK if you don't, just do your best, try as hard as you can but if you don't win there's always next week, we'll give everyone a run, its not just we're going to play the best people. A more fairer, nicer attitude, its not a win at all costs attitude"

Resources

"some of the grounds we played on last year weren't up to standard. The guys weren't playing on bad grounds"

"fouls that would get pulled up in men's soccer don't get pulled up in women's soccer 'cos you're just girls, its not serious"

Who they see playing sport

"I just don't see many girls playing" [cricket]

"Netball. How many men do you see playing it"

"[rugby union] its mainly a guys' sport, you see it televised and you hardly ever hear of girls playing it"

"[aerobics, netball, softball] I never see guys playing I just mainly see girls playing them"

"you don't see many girls playing either of these sports [cricket, baseball] so, just really male dominated"

"[volleyball] I know a lot of women who play"

"that's really how I ranked them I guess, how, you know, how I saw them, like on TV and stuff"

"you don't really see many girls playing soccer, I've always seen it as a male dominated sport"

Researchers' Perspective

Girls were readily able to associate certain characteristics with sports ranked as most masculine and identified the opposite characteristics as being associated with the most feminine sports. Girls also gave examples of how these characteristics had been observed in their sporting experience.

Characteristics of Masculine Sports	Characteristics of Feminine Sports
Physical Contact	No Physical Contact
Aggression	Not Aggressive
Power	Less Power (soft)
Don't see girls playing it	See girls playing it
Stronger, heavier, larger equipment	Soft, light, small equipment/playing space
School has only boys teams/competition	No girls team at school, only boys' teams
Teachers don't expect girls to know how to play	Teachers expect girls to know how to play
More competitive, take it too seriously	Less competitive, emphasis on socialness
more/better resources	less/lower standard resources

Girls seeing other girls play a sport and being able to recall no instances, or only a few instances, of seeing males play the sport was a factor in their decisions to describe a sport as feminine. If the school did not have a girls team for the sport, if they were unaware of a competition for girls playing the sport, if they knew no women who played the sport, if women were not seen to participate at an elite level, either in person or on television, the sport was described as masculine. Where they could recall from their experience instances of hearing about or seeing (particularly on TV) a sport played by males only, the sport was described as having masculine characteristics. What girls see other girls and boys doing sets up expectations of the gender characteristics of sport.

The characteristic most often associated with masculine sports was physical contact, "league - the whole thing involves physical contact". "Girls sports don't have much contact". Characteristics such as aggression, competitiveness, a win at all costs attitude leading to players taking the game too seriously, and power, were identified as masculine characteristics and the sports associated with these characteristics defined as masculine sports. Such comments reflect society's attitude that aggressive physical contact between women is unacceptable.

Girls also noted that feminine sports had lighter equipment, (for example, softball) and smaller playing fields (for example, netball). Masculine sports were played on better grounds, they had better coaches and their uniforms were of a higher standard.

Teachers' expectations of the sporting skills of girls and boys in their physical education classes and their support for the establishment of a girls team or competition helped define certain sports as masculine and others as feminine and hence the characteristics of masculine and feminine sports.

4.3 "SOCCER IS A SOCIAL THING"

Players' Perspective

On the field friendliness

"you can all talk and all that and there's not that same competition as there is in the boy's team"

[its fun] "when the whole team is together, laughing, joking, not being serious"

"really nice and social, have a big chat, lots of joking around"[when you run onto the field]

After game togetherness

"last year we all got along really, really well ... we always had water fights, and ate , like we always ate oranges and chocolate after the games ... always an air of friendliness and people getting along, always planning which club we were going to go to afterwards ... we always really enjoyed it"

"we've got a soccer game on Sunday and they're organising for us to go out to Sizzlers to have breakfast"

Learning from each other

"everyone helped each other to learn"

"all learnt from each other"

Feeling part of the team

"the best thing was moving to [team name] ... the first two years I played I always had, sort of, I didn't fit, I didn't always feel like I sat into the team really well, there was always a kind of, separate, I didn't really like the team that I was playing with. I didn't really feel comfortable with coaching, I always felt that I was um, kind of cramped"

[What other things would make you feel like you didn't want to play soccer any more?]"If I was made to feel not wanted as a team member. If I didn't get respect from other players"

If "I wasn't liked I would change sports as it wouldn't be enjoyable"

Support from your friends

"you need the support from your friends ... if you're playing solo a game of soccer and you don't know anybody they'll say, oh you're a good player but you don't know if they really mean that, but if my friends say you're a good player I'll know that they mean it because otherwise they wouldn't say it"

Making friends

"if people were nasty and bitchy I wouldn't go along ... they're great mates too, heaps of nice friends"

"I've met so many people 'cos I enjoy meeting people"

Researchers' Perspective

The social aspects of soccer both on and off the field, during a game or at training, make soccer fun. "I have a ball at soccer". On-field friendliness, learning and helping each other, feeling part of the team, knowing you have the support of your friends, doing things together after the game and feeling like "just another one of the girls" make "soccer a social thing". These are the observable/feelable components of fun.

Friendship contributed most to making soccer "a social thing". Being able to make new friends and affirming longer standing friendships was an important function of soccer. For one player the best thing that happened while playing soccer was "making new friends ... its like a whole new life. I now know all these people, if I hadn't of played I wouldn't have met them". Friendships were reaffirmed at training when "you get together with your friends again and you start doing skills and like you get to socialise while you're actually playing". Being in a representative team allowed another player to extend her network of friendships made through soccer, "playing for the ACT you meet heaps of people".

Travelling to a game or training could be a social activity in itself such as when friends could ride their bikes to matches scheduled at their local playing fields or rollerblade to training at nearby fields. Chatting and joking with friends at training, before the game, as they ran on to the field at the start of the game and even "while you're actually playing" contributed to the socialness of soccer. At the start of a game " its really great, just looking forward to playing ... I mean ... its like really nice and social, then you all have a big chat while you're lining up and everything, its all sort of, everyone's nice and friendly, even though you don't know them you're all joking around".

Doing special things before (for example, breakfast at Sizzlers) or after a game (for example, eating chocolates and oranges together or having waterfights), or being together after a game, strengthened friendships. Simply standing on the sideline with other team members after a game was "chatty and very social", "a nice social time".

Feeling part of a team where you helped, and learnt from, each other contributed to players' enjoyment of soccer and provided examples of friendships in action. "... Soccer is a team game, everyone helps each other out so soccer is more enjoyable [than tennis]". When you feel part of the team you have "respect for your team mates in the way you always turn up to training and you put in the effort in every game". Helping each other and togetherness were features of girls playing soccer seen as absent from boys games. "Girls accept referees decision, boys carry on ... if someone gets injured girls will come over to help, more togetherness with girls".

Friendships in action in both positive and negative situations supported these players. In successful situations, for example, passing the ball to another player, scoring a goal, intercepting a pass or winning a game, team members supported the successful player:

> *"its fun when I made a goal, it was like YAH! If you do something well everyone screams and yells".*

> *"In my team everyone's friends so they give you a clap and say well done. Builds your confidence up and makes you feel a lot better, makes you feel you could do it again next time the ball comes to you".*

Support was also forthcoming in less successful situations, such as when you miss a tackle, your opponent runs past you with the ball, you give away a penalty or you lose a game. In these situations other players on your team offered support and encouragement rather than criticism. In such situations the following comments helped girls overcome any personal feelings of failure:

> *"it doesn't really matter, they say don't worry about it, it doesn't matter".*

> *"It doesn't matter, everyone says don't worry, so I try and fix it up".*

> *"Oh, don't worry about it, get it back up".*

The socialness of soccer meant girls felt it was OK to make a mistake. They knew that other players would be there to support them.

When soccer loses its 'socialness' girls become discouraged, most are able to change teams, a few quit. "I wouldn't play if it wasn't fun". When there is a large turnover of players at the end of a season a team can lose its 'socialness' as happened to one player when the new girls thought "they knew everything" and treated those girls who had played the previous season as "the lowest of the low". This player felt the new players acted as if "they were the best in the world because they were older". The team appeared "disorganised" and "defensive" leading the player to rethink whether "you really want to play or not". Having a lot of girls showing off and not being encouraging would discourage another player from playing soccer. Bickering among players can also discourage continued participation. When you don't feel part of the team you can change teams to one where you feel more comfortable. Then feeling part of the team becomes the "best thing about playing soccer".

The coach can play a significant role in making soccer a "social thing". A poor coach significantly detracts from the enjoyment of the game and can decrease the socialness of training and playing. The role of the coach is further discussed under the theme "Importance of a good coach to a positive soccer experience".

4.4 ROLE OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

4.41 Resistance to Male Peer Pressure

Players' and Researchers' Perspectives

Boys can set the sporting agenda for girls by defining what sports are acceptable for girls to play, how they should play them and how they should look while they play. Girls can "feel intimidated by the boys". Boys intimidation is frequently verbal as was often the case for these players:

> *"when I was trying out for the soccer teams at school the guys are always there and if you make a mistake they'll laugh at you and say its because you're not like us, you can't play it as well as us".*
>
> *Q : Do guys cheer when girls do something good?".*
> *Player : "No never, they just laugh amongst themselves".*
>
> *"sometimes you're better than them and they get really mad, they swear at you and deliberately trip you over".*
>
> *"I used to get heaps of shit from guys ...". Speaking about a female friend who plays rugby union "the guys give her a lot of crap for it".*
>
> *"guys don't think girls have the stamina and strength to play hard games. When I was playing, they'd stir and laugh".*

Males also intimidated girls while playing sport with them when they "hogged the ball and would never pass it", "took it too seriously", by their attitude that "winning was all important" and by making sport "boring for girls who play with them".

Despite receiving the message loud and clear from:

> •boys - that sport is not a place for girls and in particular, certain sports such as soccer are not girls sports; and

•from society - that there are sports girls are expected to play and these are different from the sports boys are expected to play,

these girls have been able to put this message aside, as applying to other girls not to them. Despite receiving the message that there are definite gender connotations associated with sport these girls continued to play a 'male' sport.

For the players interviewed, girls can do it - they can be as good as the boys:

> *"When I was playing they'd stir and laugh and I'd say 'You should come and watch, we'd beat you anyday'. And they'd go 'yeah, right, yeah, right'. They'd just put you in those roles, like, 'why don't you play netball'. They think you're no good at it. It's really weird".*

This player had experienced pressure from boys questioning her soccer skills and her place in a male sport, rather than a female sport [netball] where they thought she should be. However, she was confident that soccer was a place girls should be and could excel in. She felt it was "really weird" that boys would think girls are "no good", girls can do it!

When asked how they felt when someone said soccer was not a game for girls, or girls can't play soccer, players reacted immediately and usually strongly in defence of girls playing soccer, their right to play and their skills as players. An example of a particularly strong defence of girls playing soccer and their soccer skills is illustrated by the following quote:

> *"I feel like saying, Yeah, come to my house, I'll get the ball and I'll kick your butt or come and play our team ... If you get the best of those girls [first division players] from each team, and put them against a guy's team, I think they'd win any day".*

Another player commented that when she heard the guys say soccer wasn't a game for girls she would "get angry 'cos its not true". Girls would "stick up for soccer" by saying "well I do" or "well that's your opinion, then I give them mine, ask them why it isn't a girls sport, why shouldn't girls be able to play it? We have our own rights, it's your own personal choice". When others implied or said girls can't play soccer one player assumed those who said girls couldn't play soccer were bigoted, joking or not aware as what they were saying was "obviously rubbish. .. Any sport is for any sex". She, like most of the other players, did not let such comments "bother" her.

Some of the girls experiences playing with boys had been positive and this appears to have been important in their soccer experience. Playing with boys was seen by these girls as:

> *"good, it gives you more skill".*

"It gives the females a chance to see ... the kinda, um, things they do, how they play, um, their tactics etc. Its just ... a really good opportunity".

"it's an excellent opportunity. You see things differently. ... they were really good players and my game improved so much 'cos they were so fit and their ball skills were so good that I had to improve myself to keep up".

The girls and young women in this study appear not to have internalised the messages they have received from society and boys in particular, about their place in the world of sport. The strength of friendships, the socialness of soccer, formed a strong base from which these girls and young women could resist male peer pressure.

4.42 Family Members Played an Important Role in Girls Soccer Experiences

Players' and Researchers' Perspectives

Fathers and brothers participation in, and knowledge of soccer, supported and encouraged girls to play, and continue to play, soccer. "My brothers played and my Dad played when he was younger, there was always a soccer thing about my family, we always played in the backyard. Whenever friends came we'd go down to the oval and play with them". Soccer being seen as a normal part of the household also emerged in another player's comments "... grown up with soccer. Dad being a coach helped".

Fathers listen and offer constructive comments. One player particularly enjoyed talking over the game with her father who had both played soccer and coached junior boys:

"[I'd] say 'Oh I made a mistake today' and he'll go, 'Oh what was your mistake' and I'll say 'This was it', and he'll go 'How can that be a mistake?'. He knows exactly what's happening in the game and he'll tell you what's happening".

Another played talked with her Dad "all the time" and he often came to watch her play. Her father "always joking" with her about soccer was enjoyable for another player.

Brothers help girls practise their skills and in practising their skills help girls feel good about themselves:

"any spare moment I'd say to my brother, 'Let's go down to the oval and kick the ball around for a while' ". Kicking the ball around with your brother "gives you time to go and talk to your brothers and you just feel good about yourself you know you'll come back all happy because you've talked and you feel really good, you know, it's great, especially if you're doing it in the rain. You come home absolutely saturated, if you come in to a happy atmosphere in the house there's nothing better".

"My brother who's twenty was really influential, he used to drive me to all the games and training sessions. He enabled me to go to rep training ... he'd played himself".

Brothers are people whose sporting skills girls admire and who support the girls soccer participation, they are "always fit" and "they're always there for me, wouldn't be where I am in soccer without them".

In one player's family both her brother and mother were enthusiastic about her playing, regularly attending games and offering advice and encouragement.

> *"Dad told me not long ago to concentrate on my career, but I blew him up, and mum did, them my brother did, so we won. ... Mum would tell me what I did wrong after a game ... my brother and mother would always come to the game. My brother would coach."*

Another player also received support from her mother who often told her "you should always play sport". Her Mum would ask about her soccer games, they'd talk about passes, about the coach and about what happened in the game. "If we don't win, it's fine, Mum doesn't care but always asks". These players' situations were unusual in that they had their mothers' support for their participation in soccer. More often mothers were described as "not being a sporting person" or being concerned with the roughness of the game and the chance of injury. Girls talked about soccer "especially with Dad" while they talked "about normal subjects with Mum".

Support, encouragement and time to listen and talk and practise skills with a family member, particularly brothers and fathers, appears to be important in girls soccer experience.

4.43 Importance of a Good Coach to a Positive Soccer Experience

Players' Perspective

Positive Comments
A good coach "has the team's interest at heart. Our concerns are his concerns. He's interested in every aspect of the team not just whether you win on Sunday". The coach has "taught me to give everything I have to whatever I do, even with schoolwork, that's just as important. He's influenced me with everything I do."
"... is really friendly and supportive ... you can relate to him"
"She is really nice ... plays on our team as well. She gets in there and has a go herself."
"serious at some stages and teaches things, but not too serious. If it's not fun, you don't look forward to going"
"... is easygoing, easy to get along with, casual, fair"

Negative Comments
Ongoing difficulties with her coach led one girl to comment "She's alright, but she's pretty rough ... she's pretty immature and she'll always give you a hard time if you're not doing the right thing ... if you do something wrong, she'll swear at you". "they have to accept that you can't do everything they want."
"the coach we've got is a little boys coach ... we're girls ... he teaches us like he teaches them". "... that's how we get treated, we'll train on a tiny little court, he'll talk to us like little boys and kids and that, I don't think its a good coaching way".
"our coach makes us run around the field if we stuff-up. I hate that ... She is OK. She plays favourites. I think it would be better if she was a bit fairer and not so grumpy"

Researchers' Perspective

Girls experience with coaches constituted an important part of all interviews. Good coaches were highly valued; poor coaches left strong negative impressions. Players held firm and consistent opinions about the positive and negative characteristics of a coach (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Positive and Negative Characteristics of Coaches

Positive Characteristics		Negative Characteristics	
Aspects of the game	Personal Qualities/Actions	Aspects of the game	Personal Qualities/Actions
being good at the sport	good to be with	doesn't turn up to training	laughs at you
devotes his/her life to the team	always positive	treats girls like boys & little kids	puts players down
good communication	never puts you down	doesn't know much about soccer	"can't be bothered" attitude
knowledge of the game	honest	poor communication	doesn't have respect for players
fit	takes note of you	has unrealistic assumptions of what a team can do	uncaring attitude towards the team
skill and control	doesn't get angry when you make a mistake	doesn't know what it feels like to be a player, to be on the field	impatient, unfair
able to meet the skill needs of individual players	can be both part of the team and separate from it		
wants to learn more about coaching	not biased towards particular players		
	has respect of players		
	understands you can only do your best		

One player's response to the question 'What makes a good coach?' is representative of other players' positive responses to their coach:

> *"... knowledge of his team, knowledge of the game is really important. They've got to have good communication skills, and they've got to be good at heart. They've got to be able to communicate with the girls and be legitimate. To be able to say honestly 'OK this weekend you're going to be on the bench' or 'This weekend you're going to be playing here, I want you to do this'. They've got to be honest. The girls have got to be confident in them, know that they're honest and know the game. It helps to have a coach who can participate, that can run with the girls, get involved in the game. They've got to be part of the team in a way that anyone can approach them and talk in a friendly way or in a serious manner with them, but they've got to be separate from the team in that they have to control it in an unbiased way".*

A coach who supports the girls both on and off the field, who stands up for them, will keep them in the game when they might otherwise have left. For example, one player continued to play despite an incident which she described as being something "that would make you want to stop" because the coaches "were really pushing for us girls" - "Our coaches were so cool". By supporting their players the coach can bring out the best in the players:

> *"... up to that point we'd been losing [two goals to nil] but we came back and beat them three to two... he was always supporting us and trying to get the best for us".*

The influence of a good coach can extend into other areas of girls lives:

> *"He taught me to give everything I have to whatever I do, even with schoolwork ... He's influenced me with everything I do".*

The negative impact of a coach can also have implications beyond the game. For one player the negative experience of being ostracised in front of team members by her coach because of a mistake she made during her first year playing soccer remained with her several years later as the worst thing that had happened to her while playing soccer.

The negative attributes of some coaches can be seen in the following description of several coaches one young woman had played under:

"he ... wasn't really in control of himself, I don't think, he sort of lost his temper a lot and made us run and stuff like that. Next coach I had didn't really know that much about soccer ... First coach I had here ... he was the one that really turned me off, I was new to the club and he was really trying to push me hard .. he didn't realise he was upsetting me and he just kept doing it and I got sick of it".

Fortunately, these two negative experiences were outweighed for this player by two positive experiences.

The coach playing favourites or using exercise as punishment discourages players. "If we do something wrong then she makes us run around the field. Which I think is a bit unfair. I mean, I don't think you can get it right straight away. If I continue soccer next year I'll change teams cause I think that is the worst thing about it"[training]. When training becomes "a joke", a place where "we weren't learning anything new ... [where] we just mucked around" players become discouraged.

Girls were able to overcome negative coaching experiences by changing teams or continuing to play if the coach changed for the next season. "I wouldn't play if it wasn't fun, I'd like to change teams next year cause my coach doesn't always have fun." Only one player felt she'd change sports as a result of her negative experience with her coach.

The gender of the coach had little influence on girls and young women's soccer experience. Most girls expressed no gender preference when asked "Do you prefer a male or female coach?"

'It's not better to have either, my previous male coach was much better, but he was much older".

"He or she's got the team's and each individual's interests at heart".

"I don't really think there's much difference. All coaches are different. Two male coaches are going to be as different as a male coach and a female coach, so its a personality thing rather than a set gender thing".

Girls evaluated their coach on the basis of her/his coaching skills including knowledge of the game, and personal qualities such as honesty, fairness, respect for players and a positive attitude, rather than on their gender.

4.5 IMAGE

4.51 Feeling Fit, Being Active, Feels Good

Players' Perspective

"at one stage last year I wasn't doing anything and I felt really fat, and you know, really sloppy".

"Yes I love it [feeling fit], nothing better".

"its been good for my knees. My body works much better. I feel better about what it does and how it works and how I feel now".

"the worst [players] will just be standing there doing nothing, the best will be out there doing what they feel like, um, so like the worst, because they're standing there you'll get the impression that they're not too happy to be there and they couldn't be bothered what they look like, you know, so they'll just look, you would say, 'Oh she doesn't look very good, she looks fat because she's standing that way', but 'cos the others are always running around you know, their heads are up high, and that, they'll look great, you know, like they couldn't be better".

"when you're overweight or you're not fit, you can't exactly do much, like you'll walk down to the shops and you'll be puffed out ... since the soccer season started I'll jog back and I won't even be puffed or anything because I'll feel good about myself ... if you're not fit you don't feel good about yourself".

"You feel better about yourself 'cos you're actually doing something".

Researchers' Perspective

These girls enjoyed being active, doing lots of running around. They clearly saw playing soccer as being active, they liked "the way you don't stop moving" and you do "lots of running around" when playing soccer. When compared to other sports such as netball, soccer offered "more chance to run around". The best soccer players are "always running around, you know, their heads are up high, and that, they'll look great, you know, like they couldn't be better". The players researchers talked with were interested in a healthy lifestyle and soccer contributed to this. Soccer keeps "you fit and healthy and having fun".

For these girls being active meant being fit and being fit felt good. Soccer "keeps you fit, you feel good and you look alright too". "If you're not fit you don't feel good about yourself".

"When I wasn't playing any sports at all I felt so unfit and I kept telling my Mum and she said 'Oh don't worry' and I said 'Oh but I want to get into sport again, so I can feel good about myself ". Feeling good about themselves was important to their desire to play, "you must feel good about yourself otherwise there's no point in playing". Girls felt soccer made a positive difference to the way they felt about themselves:

> *"Oh well, when I feel active, I feel thinner, I know that's really stupid (laughs) but I do ... if I'm not actually doing anything I usually feel lazy and fat and slobbish and gross ... when your playing you feel thinner".*
>
> *"Soccer makes you feel quite fit, feel like you're on top of stuff".*
>
> *"I feel better; feel like you've done some exercise".*
>
> *"Yeah, it does. I was playing in four teams last year ... I'm really unfit [now]. I have no energy any more ... before I'd go for a jog, go for a cycle ... You've got more confidence in yourself [when you're fit]".*

"I feel strong, I feel equal ... I can do it". Asked how this contrasted with how she felt 'usually', the player answered that it was only on the soccer field that she really became physically aware of herself, "when you're playing, you're against the other team so you're aware of yourself, when you're at home, you're not against anyone". Another player commented that she felt much better physically when she had been involved in soccer, "you feel like you've got all this energy and you don't know what to do with it. You train for four hours a week, play three hours. Then you run, it gives you heaps of confidence".

When asked whether playing soccer made a difference to the way they look, most girls showed little concern for their appearance:

> *"I'm not really into my physical appearance, no , I like playing that's it.*
>
> *"It probably tones me, but I don't really look out for that (pause) I know some people are very conscious if they're looking a bit flabby or they've got a bit of cellulite but it doesn't bother me, its what's inside".*
>
> *"I didn't think about it 'cos you've got so much confidence".*

After acknowledging that most girls of her age were seriously concerned about body size and shape one player said "I can't think of any girl in my team who was worried about their weight, that's like reserves and firsts. Everyone's just interested in playing soccer".

Players' comments concerning appearance were more likely to relate to fitness and health:

> *"fit, pretty good"*

"I don't think its so much about your body but more your fitness".

"Made me fitter. Makes me look healthier in my face ... and in my attitude".

When they looked at other girls playing soccer the players in this study saw girls who "look like girls wanting to play soccer". They saw skills rather than appearance:

"I just see the way they play, if they're any good".

"I just see it as just another game, I don't look at it any differently to males playing a game. I just see the way they play, if they're any good, I don't look at it as a female thing. If you look at any sport you look for the best players, the ones who make mistakes, you look for more what they do rather than what they look like or who they are ... a girl playing soccer is a girl playing sport".

"depends on the game and the experience of the players. If ACT women are playing, they're good, they're not afraid of the ball, they just go straight in and get it. All teams have a weak link. Good people are marked up tightly and weak players just run around so you can pick out the good and weak players".

"girls playing soccer don't worry about their appearance ... netballers are always worried about their appearance. Do I look too fat, too thin, scrawny?".

They saw "so many different types, there's girls who are sort of butch, girls who are really skinny but you'd be surprised at what they can do. There are girls who are really pretty and they do their hair really nicely even before they play soccer, athletic sporty types who are just really natural people ... there's not one type of person playing girls soccer, it's all ethnic origins".

When looking at girls playing other sports the players in this study typically showed little concern for their appearance:

"you look at what they do, not what they look like or who they are".

"a girl playing sport is a girl playing sport".

When describing good soccer players girls mentioned characteristics related to:

- skill and knowledge of the game ("good ball skills", "good footwork", "vision", "tactics", "being able to think about the game"); and
- personal qualities ("friendly", "fair", "enthusiasm", "plays to have a good time", "willing to play like a sport").

The appearance of good players was of little concern. Players' descriptions of sportspeople they admire was similarly constituted of descriptions of their sporting heroes/heroines sport skills or knowledge of the game and their personal qualities rather than their appearance:

"I thought he was a great player, cause, I mean he wasn't the fittest, he was very intelligent and he set up everything [Brazilian soccer player]".

"he's a legitimate person, he does a lot for other people, he's done a lot for rugby league especially in the ACT region [Canberra Raiders player]".

For these players their love of movement and their desire to feel fit and healthy shifted their personal focus away from what they were aware of as society's focus, their appearance, their body shape. This may be one factor that distinguishes these girls and young women from their peers.

They were however, much like other women in their modesty about their skills. They were generally unsure about where to rank themselves in terms of other female soccer players. After some deliberation one player responded to the question 'How good are you at playing soccer compared to other girls?' with "maybe above average" and compared to boys, "alright". Another players' response when asked whether she would describe herself as a good player was also prefaced by hesitancy and a pause before she replied "I'm pretty mediocre actually, I was playing heaps of soccer, I loved it and didn't miss much training but [pause] I s'pose I was pretty good in the way I was playing reserves and firsts. There's probably hundreds of girls who are better than me in first division, but I must have improved a lot to go from reserves to firsts, so I must by an alright player". Playing and having fun was more important than being 'good'. "I just play, I'm an average player. I don't really think about it, to me I'm just another player who plays for the fun of it. I don't like to think, Oh I'm so good cos I did this and that cos that really inhibits you. You think you're so good you don't have to try so hard, I like to think that I can improve and get better ... But at club level, I'm probably just another one of the girls".

Some of the players were underestimating their soccer skills as they had represented the ACT in their sport. Researchers only became aware of their representative honours through indirect reference to them in answer to other questions. Players were not concerned with rating their skills against others. Having fun, the socialness of the game, was of greater concern.

Context emerged as an important element in how these girls experience sport (Table 4.2). Playing sport with family or friends, for your school and for your club was fun for the majority of girls. While playing sport in classtime at school was described as fun by more than half the girls, sport in this context was also boring for an equal number of girls. Whether sport played in classtime at school was experienced as fun depended on the sport being played. "If you're playing a sport you like" then sport in this context could be fun, otherwise it was generally boring. Sport played with family or friends or when representing your school or your club was never boring for these girls. More girls playing sport for a club reported feeling

excited than reported feeling excited in other contexts, most noticeably, few girls reported feeling excited when playing in classtime at school. In this context sport was also reported as being too organised, having too many rules and being too serious, by some players. Sport played for a club was more often reported as being challenging and satisfying than was sport played in classtime at school. Sport played with family and friends or in a school representative team was felt to be challenging by fewer respondents than felt playing sport for a club was challenging.

Table 4.2 Players' Feelings about Playing Sport in Different Contexts

Feeling while Playing Sport	Playing sport in classtime at school	Playing sport with family or friends	Playing sport for your school	Playing sport for a sporting club
exciting	1	4	6	11
too organised	2			
boring	9			
fun	9	15	14	12
satisfying	4	6	6	8
too many rules	3			
dangerous	1			1
others take it too seriously	7			3
too competitive	1		1	2
challenging	1	1	6	12
developing skills	6		2	7

4.6 SPORT AS PART OF LIFE

Players' Perspective

Question : Do you expect to continue to play soccer in the future?

Response (Number)	Player Status			Total
	Continuing	Withdrawn	New	
Yes	5	3	5	13
No				
Maybe		2		2
Total	5	5	5	15

Researchers' Perspective

These girls and young women were definite that sport had a place now, and in the future, in their lives. They expected to continue to play sport throughout their lives:

> *"Yes, can see myself in the gym working out and doing aerobics when I'm much older".*
>
> *"Yeah, I think I will ... my life is sport really".*
>
> *"Never [give up], maybe when I'm sixty and I've got arthritis in every bone in my body".*

They had no firm vision however, of the frequency or intensity of this participation, they were adamant though, that playing sport could continue to be part of their lives. Their certainty was partly grounded in their experience of playing with or against older women who by their presence and their enthusiasm provided realistic role models.

> *"Yeah, hope to ... I see thirty year olds doing it".*
>
> *"I hope so, there are thirty plus year olds in our team. They were really into it. Fifty - that'd be good, especially if you're career was winding down".*
>
> *"My club is young, but there are older women in the other clubs".*

When asked if they wanted to become involved in aspects of soccer apart from playing, some players expressed an interest in coaching (probably primary aged players), one had thought about managing a young girls team and another thought she would probably become involved in umpiring "one day". Administration in softball might be an option for another player. Sport was not a career option for these girls, other than as a PE teacher. They recognised it was not possible for a girl to earn a living from sport, except for tennis; you "don't see professional netballers". They were however, aware that sport as a career was an option for males.

4.7 Summary

The key points emerging under each of the themes can be summarised as:

- **GENDER CONNOTATIONS OF SPORT**
  - Most girls play sport.
  - Most girls play only a few sports.

- Players recognised some sports as ones girls are expected to play and others as sports girls are not expected to play.
- Certain characteristics are associated with masculine sports and the opposite characteristics associated with feminine sports.
- A common perception exists of which sports are most feminine and which are most masculine.

- **"SOCCER IS A SOCIAL THING"**
  - Social aspects of Soccer:
    - on the field friendliness,
    - feeling part of the team,
    - before and after game togetherness,
    - learning from each other,
    - support from your friends, and
    - making new friends & affirming friendships.
  - Factors causing soccer to lose its socialness (make it not fun):
    - other players think they know everything, showing off,
    - other players not being supportive, being bitchy,
    - not feeling good about yourself,
    - schoolwork, and
    - a poor coach.

- **INFLUENCE OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS**
  - Resistance to male peer pressure.
  - Family members (particularly brothers and fathers) played an important role in girls soccer experiences.
  - Importance of a good coach to a positive soccer experience.

- **IMAGE**
  - Girls like to be active.

- Feeling fit, being active, feels good.
- Girls looking at others playing sport see skills and personal qualities rather than appearance.

- **SPORT AS PART OF LIFE**
  - Playing sport would continue to have a place in these young women's lives.
  - Some girls expressed an interest in coaching in the future.
  - Sport was not a career option for females.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Women's soccer in the ACT is a minority sport. A recent survey of junior sport reported that only 4% of girls in Kindergarten to Year 12 had played soccer for a club against another club during the previous year, compared to 24% who had played netball (Clough & Traill, 1992b). The profile of young women (aged 13-18 years playing soccer in the ACTWSA competition in 1993) reveals women's soccer in the ACT experienced a decline in registrations during the last year. Thirty five new players registered for the 1993 season, however, forty five players registered in the 1992 season did not re-register in 1993. Most movement of players both into and out of soccer was of young women aged 17 and 18 years.

The young women in this study were similar to their peers in that they had played sports traditionally described as feminine or gender neutral sports (Archer & McDonald, 1990; Clough & Traill, 1992b; Wilson, Hopkins & Russell, 1993). When playing sport with family or friends girls were most likely to ride bicycles, go skating, swimming or horse riding. When playing competitive sport for their school or for a club they had played netball, softball and participated in athletic events. Netball was the sport most often mentioned by these young women as the sport other girls of their age played, it was described as the sport girls are expected to play and was ranked as the most feminine sport. For these young women a high degree of certainty was apparent in the gender connotations of sports such as netball, aerobics, gymnastics, rugby league, baseball, cricket, touch and soccer. In a similar way to their peers (Archer & McDonald, 1990; Colley, 1987; Metheny, 1965, in Colley, 1987), girls and young women participating in this research divided these sports into those girls were expected to play, and those they were not expected to play, with distinctive characteristics associated with sports in each of these groups:

Sports Girls Expected to Play	Characteristics	Sports Girls Not Expected to Play	Characteristics
Netball, Gymnastics, Aerobics, Softball	Use of lighter, smaller equipment; Little or no body contact; Non-competitive;	Rugby League, Rugby Union, Australian Football, Baseball, Cricket, Soccer, Touch	Use of heavy, larger equipment; Extensive body contact; Highly competitive;

Despite these similarities, the young women in this study differed from most other young women of their age in that they played a sport defined by both their peers and themselves as a masculine sport - soccer.

External Support

One explanation for this anomaly lies in the factors behind the young women's decisions to begin, and to continue to play soccer.

Soccer was the first sport most of these young women had played competitively. Most had begun playing between the ages of 11 and 15 years hearing about the opportunity to play from a girl playing soccer or from brothers, sisters, fathers or teachers.

Support from young women already playing the sport may be one of the factors in these young women's decision to play soccer absent from other young women's sporting decisions. Young women already playing soccer informed nearly half of the young women about opportunities to play the game.

The young women's decision to play soccer was also tied to encouragement and support from family members. Brothers and fathers supported their decision because soccer was a good game to play. Parents generally, but especially mothers, supported their daughter's decision to play soccer simply because the young women wanted to be involved in soccer.

Encouragement offered by family members and in particular, the availability of fathers and brothers to listen and talk with the young women about their games and to practise skills with them, supported the young women's continued participation. Fathers' knowledge of the game allowed them to talk informatively and offer constructive suggestions for game situations. Brothers helped the young women practise their soccer skills and in practising their skills helped them feel good about themselves.

Mothers' roles in their daughters' sporting experience differed from those of fathers and brothers. Mothers were more likely than fathers to have regularly transported their daughter to a game or training and to have regularly watched them play.

Personal Preferences

In choosing to play soccer these young women sought a social sporting experience, rather than a competitive sporting experience. They sought a sporting experience characterised by fun, friendship, feeling good and a good coach. These factors filled the first seven places in players' ranking of the reasons which led them to play soccer.

All young women played soccer because it was fun. The support and friendship of other players was highly valued by these young women. Making new friends, playing with friendly people and playing with their friends were also important factors in the young women's decisions to play soccer.

The socialness of soccer, portrayed in the characteristics of fun and friendship, was identified by young women as an important factor in their decision to continue to play soccer. Friendship meant more than just making new friends or affirming established friendships, though these were important contributors to the socialness of soccer. Interacting with friendly people in an environment characterised by a sense of togetherness (helping, learning from and supporting each other) was also an important component of soccer friendships.

A desire to feel good rather than look good was also a factor considered by young women in choosing to play soccer. "It makes you feel good" ranked second among twenty two reasons which led girls to play soccer. "It makes you look good" ranked sixteenth. Exploration of the concept of feeling good about yourself revealed that playing soccer made a positive difference to the way young women felt about themselves. Being active meant being fit and being fit felt good. For these players their love of movement and their desire to feel fit and healthy shifted their personal focus away from what they were aware of as society's focus - their appearance.

Coaches also played a significant role in making soccer an enjoyable social experience. Good coaches were highly valued, poor coaches left strong negative impressions. Players held firm and consistent opinions about the positive and negative characteristics of a coach. They evaluated their coach on the basis of his/her coaching skills and their personal qualities (such as honesty, fairness, respect for players and positive, supportive attitudes) rather than on their gender. Players valued coaches who helped develop their soccer skills, knew a lot about soccer, helped them get fit, were friendly and made training fun. Many of the players were highly focussed on developing their soccer skills and were willing to devote time to doing this. Developing their skills was part of the fun of soccer and was an individual aim not necessarily related to the teams' performance.

Resisting Stereotyping

The young women were aware of, and had experienced, pressure from male peers to define their sporting agenda. These young women felt this pressure through:

- Verbal intimidation:
    - boys laughing and joking about girls playing sport, and
    - comments about girls' sporting ability. For example, players reported that just over one third of their male peers always said they were better players, while only 7% of their female peers said this.
- Boys' attitude to girls playing sport:
    - the young women reported that nearly all of their female peers would choose them to play on their team . Only 69% of their male peers would make this choice.
- The way boys play the game:
    - the young women reported that nearly half their male peers took playing sport too seriously while only 14% of their female peers adopted this attitude.

Despite these messages the young women were confident soccer was a sport young women could and should play and in which they could excel.

In opting to play soccer these young women appear not to have internalised the messages they had received from society, and boys in particular, about their place in the world of sport. These messages have been put aside as applying to other girls but not to them. The fun, the friendship, the focus on fitness and health, the high level of support from other players, coaches, brothers and fathers, and the positive difference these factors had on how girls felt about themselves, formed a strong base from which these girls were able to resist the traditional pressures opposing girls participation in a 'male' sport.

Leaving Soccer

While negative coaching experiences had been part of the soccer experience of a few girls, most were able to overcome these experiences by changing teams rather than withdrawing from soccer. The demands of studies were more likely to be a factor which would discourage young women from playing soccer than either male peer pressure or poor coaching. However, study pressure appeared to only temporarily affect some young women's soccer participation and failed to diminish their enthusiasm for the sport.

5.2 Recommendations

To attract girls and young women to soccer, and retain their participation, strategies based on the social values of the sport seem appropriate. These social values suggest the best avenues for recruiting players are:

- support activities from continuing players,
- ensuring soccer retains its socialness, and
- ensuring quality coaching and management is experienced by all players.

To use these avenues effectively strategies to increase the visibility of girls having fun and being active in a social environment and which provide progressive, achievable paths of recognition and skill acquisition in the areas of match play, coaching, umpiring and administration are suggested.

Recommendation 1

Initiate a system of player recognition, including recognition of:

- players' soccer skills through a player of the month scheme for each of the areas of the field (goalie, midfield, offence, defence) leading to a player of the year in each of these areas, presentation to be made at an annual dinner/specific event.
- players' desires to be involved in other aspects of the game through a program of coaching accreditation whereby players could achieve, and be seen to achieve by others both inside and outside the sport, a graded series of coaching skills.

Recommendation 2

Conduct regular coaching events for players and coaches. Coaching events could be of two types, firstly traditional coaching clinics conducted separately for players and coaches, and secondly, special days for coaches and players together. Such days could contribute to retaining the social atmosphere of the game. These days could include morning sessions for players on skills and coaching techniques and afternoon skill sessions (where coaches were in

attendance as part of the group) conducted by qualified player and coach duos. The day would finish with an informal social activity for both players and coaches. This event would be linked to, and contribute to, the achievement of accredited coaching qualifications.

Recommendation 3

Link players' interest in coaching to increasing the visibility and possibility of soccer as a sport for primary school girls by establishing a Soccer Aide program similar to the Teachers' Aide program conducted as part of the Wednesday afternoon activity program in some Canberra high schools. The program could be linked to the AUSSIE SPORT CAPS (Challenge, Achievement and Pathways in Sport) program and the ACTWSA coaching accreditation structure. High school girls with soccer playing experience and an interest in coaching could visit their feeder primary schools on Wednesday afternoons to assist teachers to conduct a sports lesson focussed on fun, fitness and soccer skills. Use of the modified version of the game (Roo Ball) could increase the effectiveness of such a program in this context. A competitive structure for girls aged 12 to 14 could be initiated to support the continued participation of girls on leaving primary school.

The increased contact with high schools such a program would foster, when combined with activities of the development officer and continuing players to raise the profile of soccer as a sport for high school girls, could encourage girls, particularly those identified through SportSearch as having a talent for soccer, to enter the sport. Girls do not normally experience the excitement of competing in a supportive (rather than competitive) team at school. If they did they might seek out women's soccer clubs in their community.

Recommendation 4

Use the media to inform current players and promote the sport to potential players. A monthly news sheet, (A3 and folded) distributed to all players (through their clubs) showing the results of games from the last month, the position of each team on the table, other statistical information such as points for and against, a club championship table, notes from clubs who need new players, upcoming events, etc., could be produced to inform current players.

By submitting regular game reports to community newspapers and encouraging reporters' attendance at matches, coaching events and other association activities, and by including newspaper sports editors on the news sheet distribution list, the visibility of girls playing

soccer could increase. If the images portrayed were of a fun, friendly, active, non-contact game their value would increase significantly.

Recommendation 5

Seek financial and administrative support from government and community organisations (for example, the ACT Association for Women in Sport and Recreation) for the recognition program, for the coaching events and Soccer Aide program.

Women's soccer currently sits at a crossroads. Sydney's successful bid for the Year 2000 Olympics and the increased visibility afforded to women's soccer with its inclusion as a sport in the Atlanta Olympic Games could provide the impetus for women's soccer to become a highly visible sport.

The ACTWSA by building on this increased visibility at a national level with a program emphasising the social values, so clearly articulated by the girls and young women participating in this study, could grasp what may be a unique opportunity for this sport to move beyond the sport for sports sake position to a philosophy embracing sport for fun and fitness. Playing soccer then becomes a possibility for many more women and girls.

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APPENDIX 1 : ACT WOMEN'S SOCCER SURVEY

ACT WOMEN'S SOCCER SURVEY

Some Questions about You

1. Circle the grade you are in this year — 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 Not at School
2. In which country were you born? ----------
3. In which country was your mother born? ----------
4. In which country was your father born? ----------
5. How many people live in your household? ----------
6. How many sisters do you have? ----------
7. How many brothers do you have? ----------

8. For each of the sports listed below place a tick in the box that tells where you have played the sport. If you have not played the sport leave the box blank.

Sport	Played in classtime at school	Played with family or friends	Played for school	Played for a club
Aerobics/Gymnastics, Gym Fun				
Athletics, Little Athletics				
Australian Football, Aussie Footy				
Badminton				
Baseball				
Basketball, Mini-ball				
Bicycle Riding				
Cricket, Kanga Cricket				
Golf				

8. For each of the sports listed below place a tick in the box that tells where you have played the sport. If you have not played the sport leave the box blank.

Sport	Played in classtime at school	Played with family or friends	Played for school	Played for a club
Hockey, Minkey				
Horse Riding				
Lacrosse, Sofcrosse				
Netball, Netta Netball				
Orienteering				
Rugby League, Mod League				
Rugby Union, Walla Rugby				
Skating				
Skiing				
Soccer, Roo Ball, Futsal				
Softball				
Squash, Mini Squash				
Swimming				
Tee-ball				
Tennis, Ace Tennis				
Touch Football				
Volleyball				
Water Polo				

9. List the sports you've played for a club or for your school during the last 12 months and how often you played.

Sport	Where Played (for your school or for a club)	Number of Times Each Week	
		Training	Play a Game
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

10. Here are a number of reasons why girls play soccer. If a reason is one that led you to play soccer, circle YES, if it did not circle NO.

I play soccer because:

10.01	my friends play it too.	YES	NO
10.02	my parents encourage me to play it.	YES	NO
10.03	I do not have to travel far to play it.	YES	NO
10.04	girls and boys can play it together.	YES	NO
10.05	my mum plays, or used to play, this sport.	YES	NO
10.06	it does not cost a lot to play.	YES	NO
10.07	I am really good at this sport.	YES	NO
10.08	I do not have to go to training sessions.	YES	NO
10.09	it makes you feel good.	YES	NO
10.10	the coach is good.	YES	NO
10.11	I am not likely to be injured in this sport.	YES	NO
10.12	my dad plays, or used to play, this sport.	YES	NO

Continued Next Page

10. Here are a number of reasons why girls play soccer. If a reason is one that led you to play soccer, circle YES, if it did not circle NO.

I play soccer because:

10.13	it makes you look good.	YES	NO
10.14	people in this sport are really friendly.	YES	NO
10.15	my teachers encouraged me to play this sport.	YES	NO
10.16	you can make a good living from playing this sport.	YES	NO
10.17	it's fun.	YES	NO
10.18	I saw it played on television.	YES	NO
10.19	it helps you to do well at schoolwork.	YES	NO
10.20	I play this sport with my parents.	YES	NO
10.21	you make new friends that way.	YES	NO
10.22	I knew the coach.	YES	NO
10.23	it's something to do.	YES	NO

11. At what age did you begin playing sport for a club in a competition against another club? ----------

12. What sport was this? ----------

13. At what age did you begin playing soccer? ----------

14. How did you find out about playing soccer? Tick the appropriate box.

From your Mum ☐	From a player ☐	From brother/sister ☐
From a teacher ☐	From your Dad ☐	From a club official ☐
From a representative of the sport ☐	From a Newspaper ☐	From a non-soccer playing friend ☐

15. For each of the statements listed below place a tick in the box if the statement applies to your mother or father.

Statement	Mother		Father	
	Before 1992	During 1992-93	Before 1992	During 1992-93
Played sport for a club in a competition against another club				
Coached a sport team				
Managed a sport team				
Regularly transported you to games or training				
Helped you at home to practise your sport				
Regularly watched you play				
Taken you to watch adults play sport				

16. Following are some questions about the coach of your soccer team (if you haven't a soccer coach think about the coach of a team you have played in). Tick the box that applies to your coach.

16.1 The coach is a Male ☐ Female ☐

16.2 Helps develop my soccer skills Yes ☐ No ☐

16.3 Wants to win at all costs Yes ☐ No ☐

16.4 Knows a lot about soccer Yes ☐ No ☐

16.5 Only puts the good players on the field Yes ☐ No ☐

16.6 Makes training fun Yes ☐ No ☐

16.7 Yells at me if I make a mistake Yes ☐ No ☐

16.8 Helps me get fit Yes ☐ No ☐

16.9 Would prefer to coach only boys Yes ☐ No ☐

16.10 Is friendly to me Yes ☐ No ☐

16.11 Embarrasses me during training/game Yes ☐ No ☐

16.12 Would you prefer a coach who is Male ☐ Female ☐

17. As you read each of the statements below think about how boys and other girls react when YOU play sport with them. Tick YES if boys or other girls react in this way, tick NO if they do not.

Statement	Boys		Other Girls	
Encourage me to play sport	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Choose me to play on their team	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Laugh & make jokes about me playing sport	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Say I'm good at sport	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Take it too seriously	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Play to the rules	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Say its appropriate for girls to play sport	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Help me to play better	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐
Always say they are better than me	Yes ☐	No ☐	Yes ☐	No ☐

18. Would you be willing to talk with the researchers again about some of the issues raised in the questionnaire?

Yes ☐ No ☐

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 2 : SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION FOR WITHDRAWN SAMPLE

ACT WOMEN'S SOCCER SURVEY SUPPLEMENT

18. Listed below are some of the reasons why people DO NOT play sport. For each reason, circle YES if it was one that discouraged you from playing soccer and NO, if it did not.

I was discouraged from playing soccer by:

18.01	my studies (lots of homework).	YES	NO
18.02	having a poor coach.	YES	NO
18.03	it costs too much money.	YES	NO
18.04	having to practise too much.	YES	NO
18.05	the risk of being injured.	YES	NO
18.06	having more interesting things to do.	YES	NO
18.07	my team losing all the time.	YES	NO
18.08	poor umpiring.	YES	NO
18.09	having barrackers and coaches yelling at me all the time.	YES	NO
18.10	the season being too long.	YES	NO
18.11	having to travel all over the place to play matches.	YES	NO
18.12	the coaches not really being interested in the players, but just being interested in winning.	YES	NO
18.13	the coach only putting the good players into the game, so that I miss out.	YES	NO
18.14	my friends not being interested in sport.	YES	NO
18.15	my parents thinking I should not play so much sport.	YES	NO
18.16	there being nowhere near where I live to play the sport I would like to play.	YES	NO
18.17	having to do other things than play, for example, umpiring, scoring.	YES	NO

APPENDIX 3 : LETTER SENT TO PLAYERS

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

Faculty of Education
Facsimile: (06) 2015065
Phone 201 2252 or 201 2318

Dear Player,

Our research team, in consultation with the Australian Women's Soccer Association, the ACT Women's Soccer Association and soccer clubs in the ACT, is undertaking the first survey of girls playing soccer in the ACT. The research is sponsored by the Australian Sports Commission.

The survey aims to establish a data base for use by ACT administrators (at both club and association level) and players. The data base will include information such as the sports played by girls and how often they play these sports, the factors which encourage girls to play soccer and girls feelings about various aspects of the game. With the establishment of the data base an enhanced capacity to plan appropriate soccer options for girls in the ACT will exist.

The researchers will be attending competition games during the coming weeks. After each game we will be asking girls, selected randomly from a list of registered players in the ACT, to complete a questionnaire. The survey will take 10-15 minutes of your time. The surveys do not require players' names and individuals will not be able to be identified in the final results.

Your participation in the survey will help to provide a more complete picture than is currently available of girls' soccer participation and girls' sporting choices generally.

Looking forward to meeting with you,

Yours sincerely

Professor R. D. Traill

Ms Coralie McCormack

Kirinari Street
Bruce ACT

PO Box 1
Belconnen ACT 2616
Australia

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The University of Canberra is a member of the unified national system and is sponsored by Monash University.

APPENDIX 4 : SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Gender Connotations of Sport

1.Do you think most girls of your age play sport ?

2.What sports do they generally play?

3.Do you think there are any sports girls of your age are expected to play? What sports are they? Why are girls expected to play these sports? Characteristics of these sports?

4.Are there any sports that girls of your age are not supposed to play? What sports are they? Why aren't girls supposed to play theses sports? Characteristics of these sports?

5.Are there sports you used to play but don't play now? When did you stop playing them? What was it about these sports that made you stop? Did any other factors influence your decision?

6.How do you feel about playing sport in a mixed gender team? How does this compare with playing in a girls only team? Is there anything in particular that has made you feel like this?

7.Rank the list of sports from most to least feminine:

Sport	Rank
Volleyball	
Softball	
Soccer	
Netball	
Basketball	
Badminton	
Aerobics/Gymnastics	
Hockey	
Touch	
Cricket	
Rugby League	
Tennis	
Baseball	

8.After completing the ranking, ask questions about the sports at the top and bottom of the list to develop some characteristics associated with masculine and feminine sports. What makes something masculine or feminine? Compare soccer and netball.

9.What is it about soccer that made you want to play it? What things about soccer do you like? Are there things you don't like? Was the fact that you would be playing on a girls only team important in your decision to play soccer? On your questionnaire you said you played soccer because it was fun, is it still fun, would you stop playing if it wasn't fun anymore? Would you look for a sport that was more fun or stop playing sport?

10.What other sorts of things would make you feel like you didn't want to play soccer anymore?

11.Why don't more girls play soccer?

12.Why don't more girls play sport?

13.What could we do to encourage more girls to play soccer or sport generally?

Feelings When Playing Sport in Different Contexts

1.Tell me about what it feels like when:

-you run onto the field at the start of a game

-you pass a ball on to another player, score a goal, save a goal, intercept a pass, win a game (ie a successful situation)

-you miss a tackle, your opponent runs past you with the ball, give away a penalty, lose a game (negative situations)

-you have finished the game and are standing with the rest of your team getting ready to go home

2.What's the best and worst thing that has happened to you while playing soccer?

3.How do you feel when someone says soccer is not a game for girls, or girls can't play soccer?

4.I'd like to talk with you about how you feel when playing sport in different places.

		Playing sport in classtime at school	Playing sport with family or friends	Playing sport for your school	Playing sport for a sporting club
A	exciting				
B	too organised				
C	boring				
D	fun				
E	satisfying				
F	too many rules				
G	dangerous				
H	others take it too seriously				
I	too competitive				
J	challenging				
K	developing skills				

Elaborate on the feeling in each context by talking about examples of situations when they felt like this, are boys more likely than girls to make you feel like this? What sort of things do boys say about girls playing sport in each of the contexts? Follow up issues for Q17 in questionnaire.

Girls' Self Perception

Physical Appearance

1.What do girls playing soccer look like? Describe what a girl playing soccer looks like.

Say you were standing on the sidelines, can you describe for me what the players on the field look like?

2.Do girls playing soccer look different from :

(a)girls playing other sports

(b)boys playing soccer

3.Do boys playing soccer do different things (play in a different way) from girls?

4.Does playing soccer make a difference to the way you feel about yourself physically?

5.Do you think playing soccer makes a difference to the way you look?

6.How do you feel about yourself physically :

(a)when you are playing soccer

(b)usually

7.Do you feel differently about your body when you are playing soccer than when you are not playing soccer?

8.What are the differences?

9.What are the characteristics of a good soccer player? What makes a good soccer player? Would you describe yourself as a good player? How good are you at playing soccer compared to other girls? boys?

10.What sort of characteristics make a person good at sport?

11.Are there any sports people you particularly admire? What is it about these people that make them special for you? Have they influenced what you do in sport in any way (eg training, playing, attitude to winning)

Influence of Significant Others

Coach

Tell me about what happens at training? What is training like?

What's the best thing about training?

What's the worst thing about training?

Can you describe your coach to me?

What makes a good coach?

In what ways has your coach influenced how you play soccer and sport in general?

Check questionnaire responses and get elaboration on points from there

Is it better to have a male or female coach?

Parents

Do your parents ask about your soccer games? What sort of things do you talk about with them when you talk about sport?

What did your parents say when you first told them you wanted to play soccer?

How do your parents feel now about you playing soccer?

Have your parents influenced your sports participation? How? -sports you play, how often you play, your attitude to winning

Follow up on parent question form questionnaire

Sporting Future

Do you expect to continue to play soccer in the future?

Do you want to become involved in other aspects of soccer, for example, umpiring, coaching, managing a team, being a club official?

Do you expect to continue to play sport throughout your life? What do you think it would feel like to be 30 and playing sport?

Is it possible to earn your living from playing sport? Would you consider sport as a career option?

Is there anything more you would like to tell me about soccer? Would you like to comment further on any of the issues raised in the questionnaire?

APPENDIX 5 : REASONS GIRLS PLAY SOCCER

Reasons Girls Play Soccer

Reason	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
My friends play it too	42 (57)	32 (43)	74 (100)
My parents encourage me to play	34 (46)	40 (54)	73 (100)
I do not have to travel far to play it	18 (25)	55 (75)	73 (100)
Girls & boys can play it together	31 (43)	41 (57)	72 (100)
My mum plays, or used to play this sport	1 (1)	72 (99)	73 (100)
It does not cost a lot to play	14 (19)	58 (81)	72 (100)
I am really good at this sport	32 (45)	39 (55)	71 (100)
I do not have to go to training	5 (7)	68 (93)	73 (100)
It makes you feel good	66 (89)	8 (11)	74 (100)
The coach is good	51 (71)	21 (29)	72 (100)
I am no likely to be injured	10 (14)	63 (86)	73 (100)
My dad plays, or used to play, this sport	17 (23)	57 (77)	74 (100)
It makes you look good	16 (22)	55 (78)	71 (100)
People in this sport are really friendly	48 (67)	24 (33)	72 (100)
My teachers encouraged me to play this sport	26 (37)	45 (63)	71 (100)
You can make a good living from playing this sport	17 (24)	54 (76)	71 (100)
It's fun	73 (100)		73 (100)
I saw it played on television	22 (31)	49 (69)	71 (100)
It helps you to do well at schoolwork	9 (13)	62 (87)	71 (100)
I play this sport with my parents	7 (10)	64 (90)	71 (100)
You make new friends that way	57 (80)	14 (20)	71 (100)
I knew the coach	14 (20)	57 (80)	71 (100)
It's something to do	46 (65)	25 (35)	71 (100)

APPENDIX 6 : PLAYERS' RANKING OF SPORTS

Players' Mean Ranking of Sports on a Scale of Most Feminine (1) to Least Feminine (13

Sport	Mean Rank	Standard Deviation
Netball	1.64	0.84
Gymnastics	2.36	1.91
Softball	4.00	1.73
Badminton	5.25	2.05
Hockey	5.29	1.73
Tennis	5.36	2.27
Volleyball	5.43	1.79
Basketball	7.00	2.32
Soccer	9.14	2.07
Touch	10.14	1.46
Cricket	10.29	1.44
Baseball	10.57	1.09
Rugby League	12.93	0.27

Players' Ranking of Sport from Most Feminine (1) to Least Feminine (13)

Sport	Ranking by Player Status														
	Continuing					Withdrawn					New				
Volleyball	4	7	4	3	7	7	7	5	7	6	5	3	#	8	3
Softball	6	4	3	4	6	2	6	*	6	3	2	1	#	5	4
Soccer	12	8	6	9	9	9	10	9	10	12	9	8	#	12	5
Netball	2	1	1	2	2	1	4	1	1	2	1	2	#	1	2
Basketball	11	6	7	5	11	6	9	7	2	7	7	6	#	6	8
Badminton	5	9	5	*	3	*	2	4	8	4	6	7	#	4	6
Gymnastics**	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	3	3	1	8	4	#	2	1
Hockey	7	5	9	7	4	4	5	6	4	5	3	5	#	3	7
Touch	10	10	12	11	8	8	12	8	11	11	10	12	#	9	10
Cricket	8	11	10	8	10	11	8	11	12	10	12	11	#	10	12
Rugby League	13	13	13	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	#	13	13
Tennis	3	3	8	6	5	5	3	2	5	6	4	9	#	7	9
Baseball	9	12	11	10	12	12	11	10	9	9	11	10	#	11	11

*could not assign a rank to this sport; #one new player felt you couldn't rank sports; ** includes aerobics